

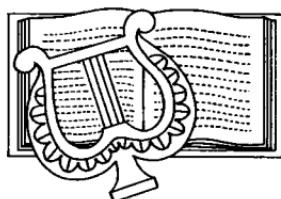


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# RECOLLECTIONS OF A DETECTIVE POLICE-OFFICER.



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*In Memoriam*

Ruth Candler Lovett

1935-1964







# RECOLLECTIONS

OF

## A Detective Police-Officer.

BY

“WATERS.”

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“Police or Peace Officers are the life-guards of the sleeping realm, without whom chambers would not be safe, nor the strong law of more potency than a bulrush.”—DENMAN.

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L O N D O N :  
J & C. BROWN & CO., AVE MARIA LANE.

## C O N T E N T S.

	PAGE
ONE NIGHT IN A GAMING-HOUSE -	9
GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY -	29
X. Y. Z. -	56
THE WIDOW -	81
THE TWINS -	108
THE PURSUIT -	126
LEGAL METAMORPHOSES -	144
THE REVENGE -	167
MARY KINGSFORD -	190
FLINT JACKSON -	216
THE MONOMANIAC -	242
THE PARTNER -	260
THE CONSPIRACY -	283

## Preface.

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IT appears to me, that the very different position in the social scale of this country, occupied by the War and Peace Soldier,—the Bayonet and the Bâton, must be mainly attributable to a traditional pre-judice derived from the ancient and heroic times when might made right, and the notion, that a cattle-stealer upon a considerable scale, though a mail-clad baron or belted knight, was also a robber and felon, would, if by some strange chance expressed, have been scouted as a preposterous absurdity ; forasmuch as no one can deny that the safety and peace of British hearths and homes are quite as much due to peace-officers or soldiers, as to their honoured brethren of the bayonet ; whilst the ‘courage’ which, as a body, they evince in the discharge of their onerous and perilous duties, is, I am bold to say, as unquailing and determined, though not displayed under such brilliant lights as that which stormed the now historic heights of Alma, and chased back the Muscovite, baffled and dismayed, from the bloody ravines of Inkermann. I, of course, speak only of the police-force of Great Britain, who are entrusted with strictly-defined

legitimate duties ; and for the proper performance of which duties they are amenable to the ordinary tribunals of Justice. I know nothing, and cannot, from experience, speak of the services required of the police of other countries, nor consequently of the consideration to which those services entitle them from the people whose 'peace' they are presumed to guard.

I, therefore, offer no apology for placing these rough sketches of police-experience before the reader. They describe incidents more or less interesting and instructive of the domestic warfare constantly waging between the agents and breakers of the law, in which the stratagems and disguises resorted to, by detective officers, are, in my opinion, and in the opinion of thousands of others, as legitimate, ay, and *quite* as honourable *ruses de guerre*, notwithstanding the lofty rebuke lately administered by a dignified judge to late Inspector Field, for presuming to speak of his 'honour ;' as a military ambuscade, or the cautious creeping of an undistinguishable rifleman within easy shooting distance of an unsuspecting enemy.

These sketches are, with one exception, published by permission from Messrs. Chambers' *Edinburgh Journal*; it is therefore somewhat superfluous to assure the reader that nothing will be found in these brief memoranda of a varied experience to in the slightest degree aliment a 'Jack Sheppard' vocation, nor one line that can raise a blush on the most sensitive cheek.

C. W.

*London, 1856.*

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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## ONE NIGHT IN A GAMING-HOUSE.

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A LITTLE more than a year after the period when adverse circumstances—chiefly the result of my own reckless follies—compelled me to enter the ranks of the Metropolitan Police, as the sole means left me of procuring food and raiment, the attention of one of the principal chiefs of the force was attracted towards me by the ingenuity and boldness which I was supposed to have manifested in hitting upon and unravelling a clue which ultimately led to the detection and punishment of the perpetrators of an artistically-

contrived fraud upon an eminent tradesman of the west end of London. The chief sent for me; and after a somewhat lengthened conversation, not only expressed approbation of my conduct in the particular matter under discussion, but hinted that he might shortly need my services in other affairs requiring intelligence and resolution.

“I think I have met you before,” he remarked, with a meaning smile, on dismissing me, “when you occupied a different position from your present one? Do not alarm yourself: I have no wish to pry unnecessarily into other men’s secrets. Waters is a name common enough in *all* ranks of society, and I may, you know”—here the cold smile deepened in ironical expression—“be mistaken. At all events, the testimony of the gentleman whose recommendation obtained your admission to the force—I have looked into the matter since I heard of your behaviour in the late business—is a sufficient guarantee that nothing more serious than imprudence and folly can be laid to your charge. I have neither right nor inclination to inquire further. To-morrow, in all probability, I shall send for you.”

I came to the conclusion, as I walked homewards, that the chief’s intimation of having previously met me in another sphere of life was a random and unfounded one, as I had seldom visited London in my prosperous days, and still more rarely mingled in its society. My wife, however, to whom I of course

related the substance of the conversation, reminded me that he had once been at Doncaster during the races; and suggested that he might possibly have seen and noticed me there. This was a sufficiently probable explanation of the hint; but whether the correct one or not, I cannot decide, as he never afterwards alluded to the subject, and I had not the slightest wish to renew it.

Three days elapsed before I received the expected summons. On waiting on him, I was agreeably startled to find that I was to be at once employed on a mission which the most sagacious and experienced of detective-officers would have felt honoured to undertake.

“Here is a written description of the persons of this gang of blacklegs, swindlers, and forgers,” concluded the commissioner, summing up his instructions. “It will be your object to discover their private haunts, and secure legal evidence of their nefarious practices. We have been hitherto baffled, principally, I think, through the too hasty zeal of the officers employed: you must especially avoid that error. They are practised scoundrels; and it will require considerable patience, as well as acumen, to unkennel and bring them to justice. One of their more recent victims is young Mr. Merton, son, by a former marriage, of the Dowager Lady Everton.\* Her lady-

\* The names mentioned in these narratives are, for obvious reasons, fictitious.

ship has applied to us for assistance in extricating him from the toils in which he is meshed. You will call on her at five o'clock this afternoon—in plain clothes of course—and obtain whatever information on the subject she may be able to afford. Remember to communicate *directly* with me; and any assistance you may require shall be promptly rendered.” With these, and a few other minor directions, needless to recapitulate, I was dismissed to a task which, difficult and possibly perilous as it might prove, I hailed as a delightful relief from the wearying monotony and dull routine of ordinary duty.

I hastened home; and after dressing with great care—the best part of my wardrobe had been fortunately saved by Emily from the wreck of my fortunes—I proceeded to Lady Everton’s mansion. I was immediately marshalled to the drawing-room, where I found her ladyship and her daughter—a beautiful, fairy-looking girl—awaiting my arrival. Lady Everton appeared greatly surprised at my appearance, differing, as I dare say it altogether did, from her abstract idea of a policeman, however attired or disguised; and it was not till she had perused the note of which I was the bearer, that her haughty and incredulous stare became mitigated to a glance of lofty condescendent civility.

“Be seated, Mr. Waters,” said her ladyship, waving me to a chair. “This note informs me that you have been selected for the duty of endeavouring to extri-

cate my son from the perilous entanglements in which he has unhappily involved himself."

I was about to reply—for I was silly enough to feel somewhat nettled at the noble lady's haughtiness of manner—that I was engaged in the public service of extirpating a gang of swindlers with whom her son had involved himself, and was there to procure from her ladyship any information she might be possessed of likely to forward so desirable a result; but fortunately the remembrance of my actual position, spite of my gentleman's attire, flashed vividly upon my mind; and instead of permitting my glib tongue to wag irreverently in the presence of a right honourable, I bowed with deferential acquiescence.

Her ladyship proceeded, and I in substance obtained the following information:—

Mr. Charles Merton, during the few months which had elapsed since the attainment of his majority, had very literally "fallen amongst thieves." A passion for gambling seemed to have taken entire possession of his being; and almost every day, as well as night, of his haggard and feverish life was passed at play. A run of ill-luck, according to his own belief—but in very truth a run of downright robbery—had set in against him, and he had not only dissipated all the ready money which he had inherited, and the large sums which the foolish indulgence of his lady-mother had supplied him with, but had involved himself in bonds, bills, and other obligations to a frightful

amount. The principal agent in effecting this ruin was one Sandford—a man of fashionable and dashing exterior, and the presiding spirit of the knot of desperadoes whom I was commissioned to hunt out. Strange to say, Mr. Merton had the blindest reliance upon this man's honour; and even now—tricked, despoiled as he had been by him and his gang—relied upon his counsel and assistance for escape from the desperate position in which he was involved. The Everton estates had passed, in default of male issue, to a distant relative of the late lord; so that ruin, absolute and irremediable, stared both the wretched dupe and his relatives in the face. Lady Everton's jointure was not a very large one, and her son had been permitted to squander sums which should have been devoted to the discharge of claims which were now pressed harshly against her.

I listened with the deepest interest to Lady Everton's narrative. Repeatedly during the course of it, as she incidentally alluded to the manners and appearance of Sandford, who had been introduced by Mr. Merton to his mother and sister, a suspicion, which the police papers had first awakened, that the gentleman in question was an old acquaintance of my own, and one, moreover, whose favours I was extremely desirous to return in kind, flashed with increased conviction across my mind. This surmise I of course kept to myself; and after emphatically cautioning the ladies to keep our proceedings a pro-

found secret from Mr. Merton, I took my leave, amply provided with the resources requisite for carrying into effect the scheme which I had resolved upon. I also arranged that, instead of waiting personally on her ladyship, which might excite observation and suspicion, I should report progress by letter through the post.

“If it *should* be he!” thought I, as I emerged into the street. The bare suspicion had sent the blood through my veins with furious violence. “If this Sandford be, as I suspect, that villain Cardon, success will indeed be triumph—victory! Lady Everton need not in that case seek to animate my zeal by promises of money recompense. A blighted existence, a young and gentle wife by his means cast down from opulence to sordid penury, would stimulate the dullest craven that ever crawled the earth to energy and action. Pray Heaven my suspicion prove correct; and then, oh mine enemy, look well to yourself, for the avenger is at your heels!”

Sandford, I had been instructed, was usually present at the Italian opera during the ballet: the box he generally occupied was designated in the memoranda of the police: and as I saw by the bills that a very successful piece was to be performed that evening, I determined on being present.

I entered the house a few minutes past ten o’clock, just after the commencement of the ballet, and looked eagerly round. The box in which I was

instructed to seek my man was empty. The momentary disappointment was soon repaid. Five minutes had not elapsed when Cardon, looking more insolently-triumphant than ever, entered arm-in-arm with a pale aristocratic-looking young man, whom I had no difficulty, from his striking resemblance to a portrait in Lady Everton's drawing-room, in deciding to be Mr. Merton. My course of action was at once determined on. Pausing only to master the emotion which the sight of the glittering reptile in whose poisonous folds I had been involved and crushed inspired, I passed to the opposite side of the house, and boldly entered the box. Cardon's back was towards me, and I tapped him lightly on the shoulder. He turned quickly round; and if a basilisk had confronted him, he could scarcely have exhibited greater terror and surprise. My aspect, nevertheless, was studiously bland and conciliating, and my outstretched hand seemed to invite a renewal of our old friendship.

“Waters!” he at last stammered, feebly accepting my proffered grasp—“who would have thought of meeting you here?”

“Not you, certainly, since you stare at an old friend as if he were some frightful goblin about to swallow you. Really”—

“Hush! Let us speak together in the lobby. An old friend,” he added in answer to Mr. Merton's surprised stare. “We will return in an instant.”

“Why, what is all this, Waters?” said Cardon, re-

covering his wonted *sang froid* the instant we were alone. “I understood you had retired from amongst us; were in fact—what shall I say?”—

“Ruined—done up! Nobody should know that better than you.”

“My good fellow, you do not imagine”—

“I imagine nothing, my dear Cardon. I was very thoroughly done—done *brown*, as it is written in the vulgar tongue. But fortunately my kind old uncle”—

“Passgrove is dead!” interrupted my old acquaintance, eagerly jumping to a conclusion, “and you are his heir! I congratulate you, my dear fellow. This is indeed a charming ‘reverse of circumstances.’”

“Yes; but mind I have given up the old game. No more dice-devilry for me. I have promised Emily never even to touch a card again.”

The cold, hard eye of the incarnate fiend—he was little else—gleamed mockingly as these “good intentions” of a practised gamester fell upon his ear; but he only replied, “Very good; quite right, my dear boy. But come, let me introduce you to Mr. Merton, a highly-connected personage, I assure you. By-the-by, Waters,” he added, in a caressing, confidential tone, “my name, for family and other reasons, which I will hereafter explain to you, is for the present Sandford.”

“Sandford!”

"Yes: do not forget. But *allons*, or the ballet will be over."

I was introduced in due form to Mr. Merton as an old and esteemed friend, whom he—Sandford—had not seen for many months. At the conclusion of the ballet, Sandford proposed that we should adjourn to the European Coffee-house, nearly opposite. This was agreed to, and out we sallied. At the top of the staircase we jostled against the commissioner, who, like us, was leaving the house. He bowed slightly to Mr. Merton's apology, and his eye wandered briefly and coldly over our persons; but not the faintest sign of interest or recognition escaped him. I thought it possible he did not know me in my changed apparel; but looking back after descending a few steps I was quickly undeceived. A sharp, swift glance, expressive both of encouragement and surprise, shot out from under his penthouse brows, and as swiftly vanished. He did not know how little I needed spurring to the goal we had both in view!

We discussed two or three bottles of wine with much gaiety and relish. Sandford especially was in exuberant spirits; brimming over with brilliant anecdote and sparkling badinage. He saw in me a fresh, rich prey, and his eager spirit revelled by anticipation in the victory which he nothing doubted to obtain over my "excellent intentions and wife-pledged virtue." About half-past twelve o'clock he proposed to adjourn. This was eagerly assented to by Mr.

Mertou, who had for some time exhibited unmistakable symptoms of impatience and unrest.

"You will accompany us, Waters?" said Sandford, as we rose to depart. "There is, I suppose, no vow registered in the matrimonial archives against *looking on* at a game played by others."

"Oh no! but don't ask me to play."

"Certainly not;" and a devilish sneer curled his lip. "Your virtue shall suffer no temptation, be assured."

We soon arrived before the door of a quiet, respectable-looking house in one of the streets leading from the Strand : a low, peculiar knock, given by Sandford, was promptly answered ; then a password, which I did not catch, was whispered by him through the key-hole, and we passed in.

We proceeded up-stairs to the first floor, the shutters of which were carefully closed, so that no intimation of what was going on could possibly reach the street. The apartment was brilliantly lighted : a roulette table and dice and cards were in full activity ; wine and liquors of all varieties were profusely paraded. There were about half-a-dozen persons present, I soon discovered, besides the gang, and that comprised eleven or twelve well-dressed desperadoes, whose sinister aspects induced a momentary qualm lest one or more of the pleasant party might suspect or recognise my vocation. This, however, I reflected was scarcely possible. My beat during the short

period I had been in the force was far distant from the usual haunts of such gentry, and I was otherwise unknown in London. Still, questioning glances were eagerly directed towards my introducer; and one big, burly fellow, a foreigner—the rascals were the scum of various countries—was very unpleasantly inquisitorial. “*J'en réponds!*” I heard Sandford say in answer to his iterated queries; and he added something in a whisper which brought a sardonic smile to the fellow’s lips, and induced a total change in his demeanour towards myself. This was reassuring; for though provided with pistols, I should, I felt, have little chance with such utterly reckless ruffians as those by whom I was surrounded. Play was proposed; and though at first stoutly refusing, I feigned to be gradually overcome by irresistible temptation, and sat down to blind hazard with my foreign friend for moderate stakes. I was graciously allowed to win; and in the end found myself richer in devil’s money by about ten pounds. Mr. Merton was soon absorbed in the chances of the dice, and lost large sums, for which, when the money he had brought with him was exhausted, he gave written acknowledgments. The cheating practised upon him was really audacious; and any one but a tyro must have repeatedly detected it. He, however, appeared not to entertain the slightest suspicion of the “fair play” of his opponents, guiding himself entirely by the advice of his friend and counsellor, Sandford, who

did not himself play. The amiable assemblage broke up about six in the morning, each person retiring singly by the back way, receiving, as he departed, a new password for the next evening.

A few hours afterwards I waited on the commissioner to report the state of affairs. He was delighted with the fortunate *début* I had made, but still strictly enjoined patience and caution. It would have been easy, as I was in possession of the password, to have surprised the confederacy in the act of gaming that very evening; but this would only have accomplished a part of the object aimed at. Several of the fraternity—Sandford amongst the number—were suspected of uttering forged foreign bank-notes, and it was essential to watch narrowly for legal evidence to insure their conviction. It was also desirable to restore, if possible, the property and securities of which Mr. Merton had been pillaged.

Nothing of especial importance occurred for seven or eight days. Gaming went on as usual every evening, and Mr. Merton became, of course, more and more involved; even his sister's jewels—which he had surreptitiously obtained, to such a depth of degradation will this vice plunge men otherwise honourable—had been staked and lost; and he was, by the advice of Sandford, about to conclude a heavy mortgage on his estate, in order not only to clear off his enormous “debts of honour,” but to acquire fresh

means of "winning back"—that *ignus-fatuus* of all gamblers—his tremendous losses! A new preliminary "dodge" was, I observed, now brought into action. Mr. Merton esteemed himself a knowing hand at *écarté*: it was introduced; and he was permitted to win every game he played, much to the apparent annoyance and discomfiture of the losers. As this was precisely the snare into which I had myself fallen, I of course the more readily detected it, and felt quite satisfied that a *grand coup* was meditated. In the meantime I had not been idle. Sandford was *confidentially* informed that I was only waiting in London to receive between four and five thousand pounds—part of Uncle Passgrove's legacy—and then intended to immediately hasten back to canny Yorkshire. To have seen the villain's eyes as I incidentally, as it were, announced my errand and intention! They fairly flashed with infernal glee! Ah, Sandford, Sandford! you were, with all your cunning, but a sand-blind idiot to believe the man you had wronged and ruined could so easily forget the debt he owed you!

The crisis came swiftly on. Mr. Merton's mortgage-money was to be paid on the morrow; and on that day, too, I announced the fabulous thousands receivable by me were to be handed over. Mr. Merton, elated by his repeated triumphs at *écarté*, and prompted by his friend Sandford, resolved, instead of cancelling the bonds and obligations held by the

conspirators, to redeem his losses by staking on that game his ready money against those liabilities. This was at first demurred to with much apparent earnestness by the winners; but Mr. Merton, warmly seconded by Sandford, insisting upon the concession, as he deemed it, it was finally agreed that *écarté* should be the game by which he might hope to regain the fortune and the peace of mind he had so rashly squandered: the last time, should he be successful—and was he not sure of success?—he assured Sandford, that he would ever handle cards or dice. He should have heard the mocking merriment with which the gang heard Sandford repeat this resolution to amend his ways—*when* he had recovered back his wealth!

The day so eagerly longed for by Merton and the confederates—by the spoilers and their prey—arrived; and I awaited with feverish anxiety the coming on of night. Only the chief conspirators—eight in number—were to be present; and no stranger except myself—a privilege I owed to the moonshine legacy I had just received—was to be admitted to this crowning triumph of successful fraud. One only hint I had ventured to give Mr. Merton, and that under a promise, “on his honour as a gentleman,” of inviolable secrecy. It was this: “Be sure, before commencing play to-morrow night, that the bonds and obligations you have signed, the jewels you have lost, with a sum in notes or gold to

make up an equal amount to that which you mean to risk, is actually deposited on the table." He promised to insist on this condition. It involved much more than he dreamt of.

My arrangements were at length thoroughly complete; and a few minutes past twelve o'clock the whispered password admitted me into the house. An angry altercation was going on. Mr. Merton was insisting, as I had advised, upon the exhibition of a sum equal to that which he had brought with him—for, confident of winning, he was determined to recover his losses to the last farthing; and although his bonds, bills, obligations, his sister's jewels, and a large amount in gold and genuine notes, were produced, there was still a heavy sum deficient. "Ah, by-the-by," exclaimed Sandford as I entered, "Waters can lend you the sum for an hour or two—for a consideration," he added in a whisper. "It will soon be returned."

"No, thank you," I answered coldly. "I never part with my money till I have lost it."

A malignant scowl passed over the scoundrel's features; but he made no reply. Ultimately it was decided that one of the fraternity should be despatched in search of the required amount. He was gone about half an hour, and returned with a bundle of notes. They were, as I hoped and expected, forgeries on foreign banks. Mr. Merton looked at and counted them; and play commenced.

As it went on, so vividly did the scene recall the evening that had sealed my own ruin, that I grew dizzy with excitement, and drained tumbler after tumbler of water to allay the fevered throbbing of my veins. The gamblers were fortunately too much absorbed to heed my agitation. Merton lost continuously—without pause or intermission. The stakes were doubled—trebled—quadrupled! His brain was on fire; and he played, or rather lost, with the recklessness of a madman.

"Hark! what's that?" suddenly exclaimed Sandford, from whose Satanic features the mask he had so long worn before Merton had been gradually slipping. "Did you not hear a noise below?"

*My* ear had caught the sound; and I could better interpret it than he. It ceased.

"Touch the signal-bell, Adolphe," added Sandford.

Not only the play, but the very breathing of the villains, was suspended as they listened for the reply.

It came. The answering tinkle sounded once—twice—thrice. "All right!" shouted Sandford. "Proceed! The farce is nearly played out."

I had instructed the officers that two of them in plain clothes should present themselves at the front door, obtain admission by means of the password I had given them, and immediately seize and gag the door-keeper. I had also acquainted them with the proper answer to the signal-ring—three distinct pulls at the bell-handle communicating with the first floor. Their

comrades were then to be admitted, and they were all to silently ascend the stairs, and wait on the landing till summoned by me to enter and seize the gamesters. The back entrance to the house was also securely but unobtrusively watched.

One only fear disturbed me: it was lest the scoundrels should take alarm in sufficient time to extinguish the lights, destroy the forged papers, and possibly escape by some private passage which might, unknown to me, exist.

Rousing myself, as soon as the play was resumed, from the trance of memory by which I had been in some sort absorbed, and first ascertaining that the handles of my pistols were within easy reach—for I knew I was playing a desperate game with desperate men—I rose, stepped carelessly to the door, partially opened it, and bent forward, as if listening for a repetition of the sound which had so alarmed the company. To my great delight the landing and stairs were filled with police-officers—silent and stern as death. I drew back, and walked towards the table at which Mr. Merton was seated. The last stake—an enormous one—was being played for. Merton lost. He sprang upon his feet, death-pale, despairing, overwhelmed, and a hoarse execration surged through his clenched teeth. Sandford and his associates coolly raked the plunder together, their features lighted up with fiendish glee.

“Villian! — traitor! — miscreant!” shrieked Mr.

Merton, as if smitten with sudden frenzy, and darting at Sandford's throat : "you, devil that you are, have undone, destroyed me!"

"No doubt of it," calmly replied Sandford, shaking off his victim's grasp ; "and I think it has been very artistically and effectually done, too. Snivelling, my fine fellow, will scarcely help you much."

Mr. Merton glared upon the taunting villain in speechless agony and rage.

"Not quite so fast, *Cardon*, if you please," I exclaimed, at the same time taking up a bundle of forged notes. "It does not appear to me that Mr. Merton has played against equal stakes, for unquestionably this paper is not genuine."

"Dog!" roared Sandford, "do you hold your life so cheap?" and he rushed towards me, as if to seize the forged notes.

I was as quick as he, and the levelled tube of a pistol sharply arrested his eager onslaught. The entire gang gathered near us, flaming with excitement. Mr. Merton looked bewilderedly from one to another, apparently scarcely conscious of what was passing around him.

"Wrench the papers from him!" screamed Sandford, recovering his energy. "Seize him—stab, strangle him!"

"Look to yourself, scoundrel!" I shouted with equal vehemence. "Your hour is come! Officers, enter and do your duty!"

In an instant the room was filled with police ; and surprised, panic-stricken, paralysed by the suddenness of the catastrophe, the gang were all secured without the slightest resistance, though most of them were armed, and marched off in custody.

Three—Sandford, or Cardon (but he had half-a-dozen *aliases*,) one of them—were transported for life ; the rest were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. My task was effectually accomplished. My superiors were pleased to express very warm commendation of the manner in which I had acquitted myself ; and the first step in the promotion which ultimately led to my present position in another branch of the public service was soon afterwards conferred upon me. Mr. Merton had his bonds, obligations, jewels, and money, restored to him ; and, taught wisdom by terrible experience, never again entered a gaming-house. Neither he nor his lady-mother was ungrateful for the service I had been fortunate enough to render them.

## Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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### GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY?

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A FEW weeks after the lucky termination of the Sandford affair, I was engaged in the investigation of a remarkable case of burglary, accompanied by homicide, which had just occurred at the residence of Mr. Bagshawe, a gentleman of competent fortune, situated within a few miles of Kendal in Westmoreland. The particulars forwarded to the London police authorities by the local magistracy were chiefly these :—

Mr. Bagshawe, who had been some time absent at Leamington, Warwickshire, with his entire establishment, wrote to Sarah King—a young woman left in

charge of the house and property—to announce his own speedy return, and at the same time directing her to have a particular bedroom aired, and other household matters arranged, for the reception of his nephew, Mr. Robert Bristowe, who, having just arrived from abroad, would, he expected, leave London immediately for Five Oaks' House. The positive arrival of this nephew had been declared to several tradesmen of Kendal by King early in the day preceding the night of the murder and robbery; and by her directions butcher-meat, poultry, fish, and so on, had been sent by them to Five Oaks for his table. The lad who carried the fish home stated that he had seen a strange young gentleman in one of the sitting-rooms on the ground-floor through the half-opened door of the apartment. On the following morning it was discovered that Five Oaks' House had been, not indeed broken *into*, but broken *out of*. This was evident from the state of the door fastenings, and the servant-woman barbarously murdered. The neighbours found her lying quite dead and cold at the foot of the principal staircase, clothed only in her night-gown and stockings, and with a flat chamber candle-stick tightly grasped in her right hand. It was conjectured that she had been roused from sleep by some noise below, and having descended to ascertain the cause, had been mercilessly slain by the disturbed burglars. Mr. Bagshawe arrived on the following day, and it was then found that not only a large amount of plate,

but between three and four thousand pounds in gold and notes—the produce of government stock sold out about two months previously—had been carried off. The only person, except his niece, who lived with him, that knew there was this sum in the house, was his nephew Robert Bristowe, to whom he had written, directing his letter to the Hummums Hotel, London, stating that the sum for the long-contemplated purchase of Rylands had been some time lying idle at Five Oaks, as he had wished to consult him upon his bargain before finally concluding it. This Mr. Robert Bristowe was now nowhere to be seen or heard of; and what seemed to confirm beyond a doubt the—to Mr. Bagshawe and his niece—torturing, horrifying suspicion that this nephew was the burglar and assassin, a portion of the identical letter written to him by his uncle was found in one of the offices! As he was nowhere to be met with or heard of in the neighbourhood of Kendal, it was surmised that he must have returned to London with his booty; and a full description of his person, and the dress he wore, as given by the fishmonger's boy, was sent to London by the authorities. They also forwarded for our use and assistance one Josiah Barnes, a sly, sharp, vagabond-sort of fellow, who had been apprehended on suspicion, chiefly, or rather wholly, because of his former intimacy with the unfortunate Sarah King, who had discarded him, it seemed, on account of his incorrigibly idle, and in other respects

disreputable habits. The *alibi* he set up was, however, so clear and decisive, that he was but a few hours in custody; and he now exhibited great zeal for the discovery of the murderer of the woman to whom he had, to the extent of his perverted instincts, been sincerely attached. He fiddled at the festivals of the humbler Kendalese; sang, tumbled, ventriloquised at their tavern orgies; and had he not been so very highly-gifted, might, there was little doubt, have earned a decent living as a carpenter, to which profession his father, by dint of much exertion, had about half-bred him. His principal use to us was, that he was acquainted with the features of Mr. Robert Bristowe; and accordingly, as soon as I had received my commission and instructions, I started off with him to the Hummurns Hotel, Covent Garden. In answer to my inquiries, it was stated that Mr. Robert Bristowe had left the hotel a week previously without settling his bill—which was, however, of very small amount, as he usually paid every evening—and had not since been heard of; neither had he taken his luggage with him. This was odd, though the period stated would have given him ample time to reach Westmoreland on the day it was stated he *had* arrived there.

“What dress did he wear when he left?”

“That which he usually wore; a foraging-cap with a gold band, a blue military surtout coat, light trousers, and Wellington boots.”

The precise dress described by the fishmonger's errand-boy! We next proceeded to the Bank of England, to ascertain if any of the stolen notes had been presented for payment. I handed in a list of the numbers furnished by Mr. Bagshawe, and was politely informed that they had all been cashed early the day before by a gentleman in a sort of undress uniform, and wearing a foraging cap. Lieutenant James was the name indorsed upon them; and the address, Harley Street, Cavendish Square, was of course a fictitious one. The cashier doubted if he should be able to swear to the person of the gentleman who changed the notes, but he had particularly noticed his dress. I returned to Scotland Yard to report *no* progress; and it was then determined to issue bills descriptive of Bristowe's person, and offering a considerable reward for his apprehension, or such information as might lead to it; but the order had scarcely been issued, when who should we see walking deliberately down the yard towards the police-office but Mr. Robert Bristowe himself, dressed precisely as before described! I had just time to caution the inspector not to betray any suspicion, but to hear his story, and let him quietly depart, and to slip with Josiah Barnes out of sight, when he entered, and made a formal but most confused complaint of having been robbed something more than a week previously—where or by whom he knew not—and afterwards deceived, bamboozled, and led astray in

his pursuit of the robbers, by a person whom he now suspected to be a confederate with them. Even of this latter personage he could afford no tangible information; and the inspector, having quietly listened to his statement—intended, doubtless, as a mystification—told him the police should make inquiries, and wished him good-morning. As soon as he had turned out of Scotland Yard by the street leading to the Strand, I was upon his track. He walked slowly on, but without pausing, till he reached the Saracen's Head, Snow-Hill, where, to my great astonishment, he booked himself for Westmoreland by the night-coach. He then walked into the inn, and seating himself in the coffee-room, called for a pint of sherry wine and some biscuits. He was now safe for a short period at any rate; and I was about to take a turn in the street, just to meditate upon the most advisable course of action, when I espied three buckishly-attired, bold-faced looking fellows—one of whom I thought I recognized, spite of his fine dress—enter the booking-office. Naturally anxious in my vocation, I approached as closely to the door as I could without being observed, and heard one of them—my acquaintance sure enough; I could not be deceived in that voice—ask the clerk if there were any vacant places in the night coach to Westmorland. To Westmoreland! Why, what in the name of Mercury could a detachment of the swell-mob be wanting in that country of furze and fricze-coats? The next

sentence uttered by my friend, as he placed the money for booking three insides to Kendal on the counter was equally, or perhaps more puzzling: “the gentleman who entered the office just now—him with a foraging-cap I mean—to be our fellow-passenger?”

“Yes, he has booked himself; and has, I think, since gone into the house.”

“Thank you: good-morning.”

I had barely time to slip aside into one of the passages, when the three gentlemen came out of the office, passed me, and swaggered out of the yard. Vague undefined suspicions at once beset me relative to the connection of these worthies with the “foraging-cap” and the doings at Kendal. There was evidently something in all this more than natural, if police philosophy could but find it out. I resolved at all events to try; and in order to have a chance of doing so, I determined to be of the party, nothing doubting that I should be able, in some way or other, to make one in whatever game they intended playing. I in my turn entered the booking-office, and finding there were still two places vacant, secured them both for James Jenkins and Josiah Barnes, countrymen and friends of mine returning to the “north countrie.”

I returned to the coffee-room, where Mr. Bristow was still seated, apparently in deep and anxious meditation, and wrote a note, with which I despatched the inn porter. I had now ample leisure for observ-

ing the suspected burglar and assassin. He was a pale, intellectual-looking, and withal handsome young man, of about six-and-twenty years of age, of slight but well-knit frame, and with the decided air—travel-stained and jaded as he appeared—of a gentleman. His look was troubled and careworn, but I sought in vain for any indication of the starting, nervous tremor always in my experience exhibited by even old practitioners in crime when suddenly accosted. Several persons had entered the room hastily, without causing him even to look up. I determined to try an experiment on his nerves, which I was quite satisfied no man who had recently committed a murder, and but the day before changed part of the produce of that crime into gold at the Bank of England, could endure without wincing. My object was, not to procure evidence producible in a court of law by such means, but to satisfy my own mind. I felt a growing conviction that, spite of appearances, the young man was guiltless of the deed imputed to him, and might be the victim, I could not help thinking, either of some strange combination of circumstances, or, more likely, of a diabolical plot for his destruction, essential, possibly, to the safety of the real perpetrators of the crime; very probably—so ran my suspicions—friends and acquaintances of the three gentlemen who were to be our fellow-travellers. My duty, I knew, was quite as much the vindication of innocence as the detection of guilt; and if I could satisfy myself that he

was not the guilty party, no effort of mine should be wanting, I determined, to extricate him from the perilous position in which he stood. I went out of the room, and remained absent for some time; then suddenly entered with a sort of bounce, walked swiftly, and with a determined air, straight up to the box where he was seated, grasped him tightly by the arm, and exclaimed roughly, "So I have found you at last!" There was no start, no indication of fear whatever—not the slightest; the expression of his countenance, as he peevishly replied, "What the devil do you mean?" was simply one of surprise and annoyance.

"I beg your pardon," I replied; "the waiter told me a friend of mine, one *Bagshawe*, who has given me the slip, was here, and I mistook you for him."

He courteously accepted my apology, quietly remarking at the same time that though his own name was Bristowe, he had, oddly enough, an uncle in the country of the same name as the person I had mistaken him for. Surely, thought I, this man is guiltless of the crime imputed to him; and yet—— At this moment the porter entered to announce the arrival of the gentleman I had sent for. I went out; and after giving the new-comer instructions not to lose sight of Mr. Bristowe, hastened home to make arrangements for the journey.

Transformed, by the aid of a flaxen wig, broad-brimmed hat, green spectacles, and a multiplicity of

waistcoats and shawls, into a heavy and elderly, well-to-do personage, I took my way with Josiah Barnes—whom I had previously thoroughly drilled as to speech and behaviour towards our companions—to the Saracen's Head a few minutes previous to the time for starting. We found Mr. Bristowe already seated; but the “three friends,” I observed, were curiously looking on, desirous no doubt of ascertaining *who* were to be their fellow-travellers before venturing to coop themselves up in a space so narrow, and, under certain circumstances, so difficult of egress. My appearance and that of Barnes—who, sooth to say, looked much more of a simpleton than he really was—quite reassured them, and in they jumped with confident alacrity. A few minutes afterwards the “all right” of the attending ostlers gave the signal for departure, and away we started.

A more silent, less social party I never assisted at. Whatever amount of “feast of reason” each or either of us might have silently enjoyed, not a drop of “flow of soul” welled up from one of the six insides. Every passenger seemed to have his own peculiar reasons for declining to display himself in either mental or physical prominence. Only one or two incidents—apparently unimportant, but which I carefully noted down in the tablet of my memory—occurred during the long, wearisome journey, till we stopped to dine at about thirty miles from Kendal; when I ascertained, from an overheard conversation of one of the three

with the coachman, that they intended to get down at a roadside tavern more than six miles on this side of that place.

"Do you know this house they intend to stop at?" I inquired of my assistant, as soon as I got him out of sight and hearing at the back of the premises.

"Quite well: it is within about two miles of Five Oaks' House."

"Indeed! Then you must stop there too. It is necessary I should go on to Kendal with Mr. Bristowe; but you can remain and watch their proceedings."

"With all my heart."

"But what excuse can you make for remaining there, when they know you are booked for Kendal? Fellows of that stamp are keenly suspicious; and in order to be useful, you must be entirely unsuspected."

"Oh, leave that to me. I'll throw dust enough in their eyes to blind a hundred such as they, I warrant ye."

"Well, we shall see. And now to dinner."

Soon after, the coach had once more started. Mr. Josiah Barnes began drinking from a stone bottle which he drew from his pocket; and so potent must have been the spirit it contained, that he became rapidly intoxicated. Not only speech, but eyes, body, arms, legs, the entire animal, by the time we reached the inn where we had agreed he should stop, was thoroughly, hopelessly drunk; and so savagely

quarrelsome, too, did he become, that I expected every instant to hear my real vocation pointed out for the edification of the company. Strange to say, utterly stupid and savage as he seemed, all dangerous topics were carefully avoided. When the coach stopped, he got out—how, I know not—and reeled and tumbled into the tap-room, from which he declared he would not budge an inch till next day. Vainly did the coachman remonstrate with him upon his foolish obstinacy ; he might as well have argued with a bear ; and he at length determined to leave him to his drunken humour. I was out of patience with the fellow ; and snatching an opportunity when the room was clear, began to upbraid him for his vexatious folly. He looked sharply round, and then, his body as evenly balanced, his eye as clear, his speech as free as my own, crowed out in a low exulting voice, “ Didn’t I tell you I’d manage it nicely ? ” The door opened, and, in a twinkling, extremity of drunkenness, of both brain and limb, was again assumed with a perfection of acting I have never seen equalled. He had studied from nature, that was perfectly clear. I was quite satisfied, and with renewed confidence obeyed the coachman’s call to take my seat. Mr. Bristowe and I were now the only inside passengers ; and as farther disguise was useless, I began stripping myself of my superabundant clothing, wig, spectacles, &c. and in a few minutes, with the help of a bundle I had with me, presented

to the astonished gaze of my fellow-traveller the identical person that had so rudely accosted him in the coffee-room of the Saracen's Head Inn.

"Why, what, in the name of all that's comical, is the meaning of this?" demanded Mr. Bristowe, laughing immoderately at my changed appearance.

I briefly and coolly informed him; and he was for some minutes overwhelmed with consternation and astonishment. He had not, he said, even heard of the catastrophe at his uncle's. Still, amazed and bewildered as he was, no sign which I could interpret into an indication of guilt escaped him.

"I do not wish to obtrude upon your confidence, Mr. Bristowe," I remarked, after a long pause; "but you must perceive that unless the circumstances I have related to you are in some way explained, you stand in a perilous predicament."

"You are right," he replied, after some hesitation. "*It is a tangled web;* still, I doubt not that some mode of vindicating my perfect innocence will present itself."

He then relapsed into silence; and neither of us spoke again till the coach stopped, in accordance with a previous intimation I had given the coachman, opposite the gate of the Kendal prison. Mr. Bristowe started, and changed colour, but instantly mastering his emotion, he calmly said, "You of course but perform your duty; mine is not to distrust a just and all-seeing Providence."

We entered the jail, and the necessary search of his clothes and luggage was effected as forbearingly as possible. To my great dismay we found amongst the money in his purse a Spanish gold piece of a peculiar coinage, and in the lining of his portmanteau, very dexterously hidden, a cross set with brilliants, both of which I knew, by the list forwarded to the London police, formed part of the plunder carried off from Five Oaks' House. The prisoner's vehement protestations that he could not conceive how such articles came into his possession, excited a derisive smile on the face of the veteran turnkey ; whilst I was thoroughly dumbfounded by the seemingly complete demolition of the theory of innocence I had woven out of his candid open manner and unshakeable hardihood of nerve.

"I dare say the articles came to you in your sleep ! " sneered the turnkey, as we turned to leave the cell.

"Oh," I mechanically exclaimed, "in his sleep ! I had not thought of that !" The man stared ; but I had passed out of the prison before he could express his surprise or contempt in words.

The next morning the justice-room was densely crowded, to hear the examination of the prisoner. There was also a very numerous attendance of magistrates ; the case, from the position in life of the prisoner, and the strange and mysterious circumstances of the affair altogether, having excited an extraordinary and extremely painful interest amongst

all classes in the town and neighbourhood. The demeanour of the accused gentleman was anxious certainly, but withal calm and collected ; and there was, I thought, a light of fortitude and conscious probity in his clear, bold eyes, which guilt never yet successfully simulated.

After the hearing of some minor evidence, the fishmonger's boy was called, and asked if he could point-out the person he had seen at Five Oaks on the day preceding the burglary ? The lad looked fixedly at the prisoner for something more than a minute without speaking, and then said, "The gentleman was standing before the fire when I saw him, with his cap on ; I should like to see this person with his cap on before I say anything." Mr. Bristowe dashed on his foraging cap, and the boy immediately exclaimed, "That is the man !" Mr. Cowan, a solicitor, retained by Mr. Bagshawe for his nephew, objected that this was, after all, only swearing to a cap, or at best to the *ensemble* of a dress, and ought not to be received. The chairman, however, decided that it must be taken *quantum valeat*, and in corroboration of other evidence. It was next deposed by several persons that the deceased Sarah King had told them that her master's nephew had positively arrived at Five Oaks. An objection to the reception of this evidence, as partaking of the nature of "hearsay," was also made, and similarly overruled. Mr. Bristowe begged to observe "that Sarah King was not one of his

uncle's old servants, and was entirely unknown to him: it was quite possible, therefore, that he was personally unknown to her." The bench observed that all these observations might be fitly urged before a jury; but, in the present stage of the proceedings, were uselessly addressed to them, whose sole duty it was to ascertain if a sufficiently strong case of suspicion had been made out against the prisoner to justify his committal for trial. A constable next proved finding a portion of a letter which he produced, in one of the offices of Five Oaks; and then Mr. Bagshawe was directed to be called in. The prisoner, upon hearing this order given, exhibited great emotion, and earnestly intreated that his uncle and himself might be spared the necessity of meeting each other for the first time after a separation of several years under such circumstances.

"We can receive no evidence against you, Mr. Bristowe, in your absence," replied the chairman, in a compassionate tone of voice; "but your uncle's deposition will occupy but a few minutes. It is, however, indispensable."

"At least, then, Mr. Cowan," said the agitated young man, "prevent my sister from accompanying her uncle: I could not bear *that*."

He was assured she would not be present; in fact she had become seriously ill through anxiety and terror; and the crowded assemblage awaited in painful silence, the approach of the reluctant pros-

cutor. He presently appeared—a venerable, white-haired man ; seventy years old at least he seemed, his form bowed by age and grief, his eyes fixed upon the ground, and his whole manner indicative of sorrow and dejection, “Uncle !” cried the prisoner, springing towards him. The aged man looked up, seemed to read in the clear countenance of his nephew, a full refutation of the suspicions entertained against him, tottered forwards with outspread arms, and, in the words of the Sacred text, “fell upon his neck, and wept,” exclaiming in choking accents, “Forgive me—forgive me, Robert, that I ever for a moment doubted you. Mary never did—never, Robert ; not for an instant.”

A profound silence prevailed during this outburst of feeling, and a considerable pause ensued before the usher of the court, at a gesture from the chairman, touched Mr. Bagshawe’s arm, and begged his attention to the bench. “Certainly, certainly,” said he, hastily wiping his eyes, and turning towards the court. “My sister’s child, gentlemen,” he added appealingly, “who has lived with me from childhood : you will excuse me, I am sure.”

“There needs no excuse, Mr. Bagshawe,” said the chairman kindly ; “but it is necessary this unhappy business should be proceeded with. Hand the witness the portion of the letter found at Five Oaks. Now, is that your handwriting ; and is it a portion of the letter you sent to your nephew, informing him of

the large sum of money kept for a particular purpose at Five Oaks?"

"It is."

"Now," said the clerk to the magistrates, addressing me, "please to produce the articles in your possession."

I laid the Spanish coin and the cross upon the table.

"Please to look at those two articles, Mr. Bagshawe," said the chairman. "Now, sir, on your oath, are they a portion of the property of which you have been robbed?"

The aged gentleman stooped forward and examined them earnestly; then turned and looked with quivering eyes, if I may be allowed the expression, in his nephew's face; but returned no answer to the question.

"It is necessary you should reply, Yes or No, Mr. Bagshawe," said the clerk.

"Answer, uncle," said the prisoner, soothingly: "fear not for me. God and my innocence to aid, I shall yet break through the web of villany in which I at present seem hopelessly involved."

"Bless you, Robert—bless you! I am sure you will. Yes, gentlemen, the cross and coin on the table are part of the property carried off."

A smothered groan, indicative of the sorrowing sympathy felt for the venerable gentleman, arose from the crowded court on hearing this declaration.

I then deposed to finding them as previously stated. As soon as I concluded, the magistrates consulted together for a few minutes ; and then the chairman, addressing the prisoner, said, “ I have to inform you that the bench are agreed that sufficient evidence has been adduced against you to warrant them in fully committing you for trial. We are of course bound to hear anything you have to say ; but such being our intention, your professional adviser will perhaps recommend you to reserve whatever defence you have to make for another tribunal : here it could not avail you.”

Mr. Cowan expressed his concurrence in the intimation of the magistrate ; but the prisoner vehemently protested against sanctioning by his silence the accusation preferred against him.

“ I have nothing to reserve,” he exclaimed, with passionate energy ; “ nothing to conceal. I will not owe my acquittal of this foul charge to any trick of lawyercraft. If I may not come out of this investigation with an untainted name, I desire not to escape at all. The defence, or rather the suggestive facts I have to offer for the consideration of the bench are these :—On the evening of the day I received my uncle’s letter I went to Drury Lane theatre, remaining out very late. On my return to the hotel, I found I had been robbed of my pocket-book, which contained not only that letter, and a considerable sum in bank-notes, but papers of great professional

importance to me. It was too late to adopt any measures for its recovery that night; and the next morning, as I was dressing myself to go out, in order to apprise the police authorities of my loss, I was informed that a gentleman desired to see me instantly on important business. He was shown up, and announced himself to be a detective police-officer: the robbery I had sustained had been revealed by an accomplice, and it was necessary I should immediately accompany him.. We left the hotel together; and after consuming the entire day in perambulating all sorts of by-streets, and calling at several suspicious-looking places, my officious friend all at once discovered that the thieves had left town for the west of England, hoping, doubtless, to reach a large town, and get gold for the notes before the news of their having been stopped should have reached it. He insisted upon immediate pursuit. I wished to return to the hotel for a change of clothes, as I was but lightly clad, and night-travelling required warmer apparel. This he would not hear of, as the night coach was on the point of starting. He, however, contrived to supply me from his own resources with a greatcoat—a sort of policeman's cape—and a rough travelling-cap, which tied under the chin. In due time we arrived at Bristol, where I was kept for several days loitering about; till, finally, my guide decamped, and I returned to London. An hour after arriving there, I gave

information at Scotland Yard of what had happened, and afterwards booked myself by the night coach for Kendal. This is all I have to say."

This strange story did not produce the slightest effect upon the bench, and very little upon the auditory, and yet I felt satisfied it was strictly true. It was not half ingenious enough for a made-up story. Mr. Bagshawe, I should have stated, had been led out of the justice-hall immediately after he had finished his deposition.

"Then, Mr. Bristowe," said the magistrate's clerk, "assuming this curious narrative to be correct, you will be easily able to prove an *alibi*?"

"I have thought over that, Mr. Clerk," returned the prisoner mildly, "and must confess that, remembering how I was dressed and wrapped up—that I saw but few persons, and those casually and briefly, I have strong misgivings of my power to do so."

"That is perhaps the less to be lamented," replied the county clerk, in a sneering tone, "inasmuch as the possession of those articles," pointing to the cross and coin on the table, "would necessitate another equally probable though quite different story."

"That is a circumstance," replied the prisoner, in the same calm tone as before, "which I cannot in the slightest manner account for."

No more was said, and the order for his committal

to the county jail at Appleby on the charge of "wilful murder" was given to the clerk. At this moment a hastily-scrawled note from Barnes was placed in my hands. I had no sooner glanced over it, than I applied to the magistrates for an adjournment till the morrow, on the ground that I could then produce an important witness, whose evidence at the trial it was necessary to assure. The application was, as a matter of course, complied with; the prisoner was remanded till the next day, and the court adjourned.

As I accompanied Mr. Bristowe to the vehicle in waiting to reconvey him to jail, I could not forbear whispering, "Be of good heart, sir, we shall unravel this mystery yet, depend upon it." He looked keenly at me; and then, without other reply than a warm pressure of the hand, jumped into the carriage.

"Well, Barnes," I exclaimed as soon as we were in a room by ourselves, and the door closed, "what is it you have discovered?"

"That the murderers of Sarah King are yonder at the Talbot where you left me."

"Yes: so I gather from your note. But what evidence have you to support your assertion?"

"This! Trusting to my apparent drunken imbecility, they occasionally dropped words in my presence which convinced me not only that they were the guilty parties, but that they had come down here to carry off the plate, somewhere concealed

in the neighbourhood. This they mean to do to-night."

"Anything more?"

"Yes. You know I am a ventriloquist in a small way, as well as a bit of a mimic: well, I took occasion when the youngest of the rascals—the one that sat beside Mr. Bristowe, and got out on the top of the coach the second evening, because freezing cold as it was, he said the inside was too hot and close"—.

"Oh, I remember. Dolt that I was, not to recall it before. But go on."

"Well, he and I were alone together in the parlour about three hours ago—I dead tipsy as ever—when he suddenly heard the voice of Sarah King at his elbow exclaiming, 'Who is that in the plate closet?' If you had seen the start of horror which he gave, the terror which shook his failing limbs as he glanced round the apartment, you would no longer have entertained a doubt on the matter."

"This is scarcely judicial proof, Barnes; but I dare say we shall be able to make something of it. You return immediately; about nightfall I will rejoin you in my former disguise."

It was early in the evening when I entered the Talbot, and seated myself in the parlour. Our three friends were present, and so was Barnes.

"Is not that fellow sober yet?" I demanded of one of them.

"No; he has been lying about drinking and snoring ever since. He went to bed, I hear this afternoon; but he appears to be little the better for it."

I had an opportunity soon afterwards of speaking to Barnes privately, and found that one of the fellows had brought a chaise-cart and horse from Kendal, and that all three were to depart in about an hour, under pretence of reaching a town about fourteen miles distant, where they intended to sleep. My plan was immediately taken: I returned to the parlour, and watching my opportunity, whispered into the ear of the young gentleman whose nerves had been so shaken by Barnes' ventriloquism, and who, by the way, was *my* old acquaintance—"Dick Staples, I want a word with you in the next room." I spoke in my natural voice, and lifted, for his especial study and edification, the wig from my forehead. He was thunderstruck; and his teeth chattered with terror. His two companions were absorbed over a low game at cards, and did not observe us. "Come," I continued in the same whisper, "there is not a moment to lose; if you would save yourself, follow me!" He did so, and I led him into an adjoining apartment, closed the door, and drawing a pistol from my coat-pocket, said—"You perceive, Staples, that the game is up: you personated Mr. Bristowe at his uncle's house at Five Oaks, dressed in a precisely similar suit of clothes

to that which he wears. You murdered the servant"—

"No—no—no, not I," gasped the wretch: "not I: I did not strike her"—

"At all events you were present, and that, as far as the gallows is concerned, is the same thing. You also picked that gentleman's pocket during your journey from London, and placed one of the stolen Spanish pieces in his purse; you then went on the roof of the coach, and by some ingenious means or other contrived to secrete a cross set with brilliants in his portmanteau."

"What shall I do—what shall I do?" screamed the fellow, half dead with fear, and slipping down on a chair; "what shall I do to save my life—my life?"

"First get up and listen. If you are not the actual murderer"—

"I am not—upon my soul I am not!"

"If you are not, you will probably be admitted king's evidence; though, mind, I make no promises. Now, what is the plan of operations for carrying off the booty?"

"They are going in the chaise-cart almost immediately to take it up: it is hidden in the copse yonder. I am to remain here, in order to give an alarm should any suspicion be excited, by showing two candles at our bedroom window; and if all keeps right, I am to join them at the cross-roads, about a quarter of a mile from hence."

"All right. Now return to the parlour: I will follow you! and remember that on the slightest hint of treachery I will shoot you as I would a dog."

About a quarter of an hour afterwards his two confederates set off in the chaise-cart: I, Barnes, and Staples, cautiously followed, the latter handcuffed, and superintended by the ostler of the inn, whom I for the nonce pressed into the king's service. The night was pitch dark fortunately, and the noise of the cart-wheels effectually drowned the sound of our footsteps. At length the cart stopped; the men got out, and were soon busily engaged in transferring the buried plate to the cart. We cautiously approached, and were soon within a yard or two of them, still unperceived.

"Get into the cart," said one of them to the other, "and I will hand the things up to you." His companion obeyed.

"Hollo!" cried the fellow, "I thought I told you"—

"That you are nabbed at last!" I exclaimed, tripping him suddenly up. "Barnes, hold the horse's head. Now, sir, attempt to budge an inch out of that cart, and I'll send a bullet through your brains." The surprise was complete; and so terror stricken were they, that neither resistance nor escape was attempted. They were soon handcuffed and otherwise secured; the remainder of the plate was placed in the cart; and we made the best of our way

to Kendal jail, where I had the honour of lodging them at about nine o'clock in the evening. The news, late as it was, spread like wildfire, and innumerable were the congratulations which awaited me when I reached the inn where I lodged. But that which recompensed me a thousandfold for what I had done, was the fervent embrace in which the white-haired uncle, risen from his bed to assure himself of the truth of the news, locked me, as he called down blessings from Heaven upon my head! There are blessed moments even in the life of a police-officer.

Mr. Bristowe was of course liberated on the following morning; Staples was admitted king's evidence; and one of his accomplices—the actual murderer—was hanged, the other transported. A considerable portion of the property was also recovered. The gentleman who—to give time and opportunity for the perpetration of the burglary, suggested by the perusal of Mr. Bagshawe's letter—induced Mr. Bristowe to accompany him to Bristol, was soon afterwards transported for another offence.

## Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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X. Y. Z.

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THE following advertisement appeared in several of the London Journals in the year 1832:—“ If Owen Lloyd, a native of Wales, and who, it is believed, resided for many years in London as clerk in a large mercantile establishment, will forward his present address to X.Y.Z., Post Office, St. Martin’s-le-Grand, to be left till called for, he will hear of something greatly to his advantage.”

My attention had been attracted to this notice by its very frequent appearance in the journal which I was chiefly in the habit of reading; and, from my

professional habits of thinking, I had set it down in my own mind as a *trap* for some offender against the principles of *meum* and *tuum*, whose presence in a criminal court was very earnestly desired. I was confirmed in this conjecture by observing that, in despair of Owen Lloyd's voluntary disclosure of his retreat, a reward of fifty guineas, payable by a respectable solicitor of Lothbury, was ultimately offered to any person who would furnish X.Y.Z. with the missing man's address. "An old bird," I mentally exclaimed, on perusing this paragraph, "and not to be caught with chaff; that is evident." Still more to excite my curiosity, and at the same time bring the matter within the scope of my own particular functions, I found on taking up the "Police Gazette," a reward of thirty guineas offered for the *apprehension* of Owen Lloyd, whose person and manners were minutely described. "The pursuit grows hot," thought I, throwing down the paper, and hastening to attend a summons just brought me from the superintendent; "and if Owen Lloyd is still within the four seas, his chance of escape seems but a poor one."

On waiting on the superintendent, I was directed to put myself in immediate personal communication with a Mr. Smith, the head of an eminent wholesale house in the City.

"In the City!"

"Yes; but your business with Mr. Smith is relative to the extensive robbery at his West-end residence

a week or two ago. The necessary warrants for the apprehension of the suspected parties have been, I understand, obtained, and on your return will, together with some necessary memoranda, be placed in your hands."

I at once proceeded to my destination, and on my arrival, was immediately ushered into a dingy back-room, where I was desired to wait till Mr. Smith, who was just then busily engaged, could speak to me. Casting my eyes over a table, near which the clerk had placed me a chair, I perceived a newspaper and the "Police Gazette," in both of which the advertisements for the discovery of Owen Lloyd were strongly underlined. "Oh, ho," thought I; "Mr. Smith, then, is the X.Y.Z. who is so extremely anxious to renew his acquaintance with Mr. Owen Lloyd; and I am the honoured individual selected to bring about the desired interview. Well, it is in my new vocation—one which can scarcely be dispensed with, it seems, in this busy, scheming life of ours."

Mr. Smith did not keep me waiting long. He seemed a hard, shrewd, business man, whose still wiry frame, brisk, active gait and manner, and clear, decisive eye, indicated—though the snows of more than sixty winters had passed over his head—a yet vigorous life, of which the morning and the noon had been spent in the successful pursuit of wealth and its accompaniment—social consideration and influence.

"You have, I suppose, read the advertisements marked on these papers?"

"I have, and of course conclude that you, sir, are X. Y. Z."

"Of course, conclusions," rejoined Mr. Smith with a quite perceptible sneer, "are usually very silly ones: in this instance especially so. My name, you ought to be aware, is Smith: X. Y. Z., whoever he may be, I expect in a few minutes. In just seventeen minutes," added the exact man of business; "for I, by letter, appointed him to meet me here at one o'clock precisely. My motive, in seeking an interview with him, it is proper I should tell you, is the probability that he, like myself, is a sufferer by Owen Lloyd, and may not therefore object to defray a fair share of the cost likely to be incurred in unkennelling the delinquent, and prosecuting **him** to conviction; or, which would be far better, he may be in possession of information that will enable us to obtain completely the clue I already almost grasp. But we must be cautious: X. Y. Z. *may* be a relative or friend of Lloyd's, and in that case, to possess him of our plans would answer no purpose but to afford **him** an opportunity of baffling them. Thus much premised, I had better at once proceed to read over to you a few particulars I have jotted down, which, you will perceive, throw light and colour over the suspicions I have been within these few days compelled to entertain. You are doubtless acquainted with the full

particulars of the robbery at my residence, Brook Street, last Thursday fortnight."

"Yes; especially the report of the officers, that the crime must have been committed by persons familiar with the premises and the general habits of the family."

"Precisely. Now have you your memorandum-book ready?"

"Quite so."

"You had better write with ink," said Mr. Smith, pushing an inkstand and pens towards me. "Important memoranda should never, where there is a possibility of avoiding it, be written in pencil. Friction, thumbing, use of any kind, often partially obliterates them, creating endless confusion and mistakes. Are you ready?"

"Perfectly."

"Owen Lloyd, a native of Wales, and, it was understood, descended from a highly-respectable family there. About five feet eight; but I need not describe his person over again. Many years with us, first as junior, then as head clerk; during which his conduct, as regards the firm, was exemplary. A man of yielding, irresolute mind—if indeed a person can be said to really possess a mind at all who is always changing it for some other person's—incapable of saying 'No' to embarrassing, impoverishing requests—one in short, Mr. Waters, of that numerous class of individuals whom fools say are nobody's enemies but their own, as if that were possible"—

"I understand ; but I really do not see how this bears upon"—

"The mission you are directed to undertake ? I think it does, as you will presently see. Three years ago, Owen Lloyd having involved himself, in consequence of the serious defect of character I have indicated, in large liabilities for pretended friends, left our employment ; and to avoid a jail, fled, no one could discover whither. Edward Jones, also a native of the principality, whose description, as well as that of his wife, you will receive from the superintendent, was discharged about seven years since from our service for misconduct, and went, we understood, to America. He always appeared to possess great influence over the mind of his considerably younger countryman Lloyd. Jones and his wife were seen three evenings since by one of our clerks near Temple Bar. I am of opinion, Mr. Waters," continued Mr. Smith, removing his spectacles, and closing the notebook, from which he had been reading, "that it is only the first step in crime, or criminal imprudence, which feeble-minded men especially long hesitate or boggle at ; and I now more than suspect that, pressed by poverty, and very possibly yielding to the persuasions and example of Jones—who, by the way, was as well acquainted with the premises in Brook Street as his fellow-clerk—the once honest, ductile Owen Lloyd, is now a common thief and burglar."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. A more minute search led to the discovery, the day before yesterday, of a pocket-book behind some book-shelves in the library. As no property had been taken from that room—though the lock of a large iron chest, containing coins and medals, had been evidently tampered with—the search there was not at first very rigorous. That pocket-book—here it is—belonged, I know, to Owen Lloyd when in **our** service. See, here are his initials stamped on the cover."

"Might he not have inadvertently left it there when with you?"

"You will scarcely think so after reading the date of the five-pound note of the Hampshire County Bank, which you will find within the inner lining."

"The date is 1831."

"Exactly. I have also strong reason for believing that Owen Lloyd is now, or has been lately, residing in some part of Hampshire."

"That is important."

"This letter," continued Mr. Smith; and then pausing for a brief space in some embarrassment, he added—"The commissioner informed me, Mr. Waters, that you were a person upon whose good sense and *discretion*, as well as sagacity and courage, every confidence might be placed. I therefore feel less difficulty than I otherwise should in admitting you a little behind the family screen, and entering with you upon matters one would not willingly have bruited to the public ear."

I bowed, and he presently proceeded.

"Owen Lloyd, I should tell you, is married to a very amiable, superior sort of woman, and has one child, a daughter named Caroline, an elegant, gentle-mannered, beautiful girl I admit, to whom my wife was much attached, and she was consequently a frequent visitor in Brook Street. This I always felt was very imprudent; and the result was, that my son Arthur Smith—only about two years her senior; she was just turned of seventeen when her father was compelled to fly from his creditors—formed a silly boyish attachment for her. They have since I gather from this letter, which I found yesterday in Arthur's dressing-room, carried on, at long intervals, a clandestine correspondence, waiting for the advent of more propitious times—which, being interpreted," added Mr. Smith, with a sardonic sneer, "means of course my death and burial."

"You are in possession, then, if Miss Caroline Lloyd is living with her father, of his precise place of abode?"

"Not exactly. The correspondence is, it seems, carried on without the knowledge of Owen Lloyd; and the girl states, in answer, it should seem, to Arthur's inquiries, that her father would never forgive her if, under present circumstances, she disclosed his place of residence—we can now very well understand that—and she entreats Arthur not to persist, at least for the present, in his attempts to discover her. My son, you must understand, is now of age, and so far

as fortune is concerned, is, thanks to a legacy from an aunt on his mother's side, independent of me."

"What post-mark does the letter bear?"

"Charing-Cross. Miss Lloyd states that it will be posted in London by a friend; that friend being, I nothing doubt, her father's confederate, Jones. But to us the most important part of the epistle is the following line:—'My father met with a sad accident in the forest some time ago, but is now quite recovered.' The words *in the forest* have, you see, been written over, but not so entirely as to prevent their being, with a little trouble, traced. Now, coupling this expression with the Hampshire bank-note, I am of opinion that Lloyd is concealed somewhere in the New Forest."

"A shrewd guess, at all events."

"You now perceive what weighty motives I have to bring this man to justice. The property carried off I care little comparatively about; but the intercourse between the girl and my son must at any cost be terminated"—

He was interrupted by a clerk, who entered to say that Mr. William Lloyd, the gentleman who had advertised as "X. Y. Z." desired to speak to him. Mr. Smith directed Mr. Lloyd to be shown in; and then, snatching up the "Police Gazette," and thrusting it into one of the table-drawers, said in a low voice, but marked emphasis, "A relative, no doubt, by the name: be silent, and be watchful."

A minute afterwards Mr. Lloyd was ushered into the room. He was a thin, emaciated, and apparently sorrow-stricken man, and on the wintry side of middle age, but of mild, courteous, gentlemanly speech and manners. He was evidently nervous and agitated, and after a word or two of customary salutation, said hastily, “I gather from this note, sir, that you can afford me tidings of my long-lost brother Owen: where is he?” He looked eagerly round the apartment, gazed with curious earnestness in my face, and then again turned with tremulous anxiety to Mr. Smith. “Is he dead? Pray do not keep me in suspense.”

“Sit down, sir,” said Mr. Smith, pointing to a chair. “Your brother, Owen Lloyd, was for many years a clerk in this establishment”—

“*Was—was!*” interrupted Mr. Lloyd, with greatly-increased agitation; “not now, then—he has left you?”

“For upwards of three years. A few days ago—pray do not interrupt me—I obtained intelligence of him, which, with such assistance as you may possibly be able to afford, will perhaps suffice to enable this gentleman”—pointing to me—“to discover his present residence.”

I could not stand the look which Mr. Lloyd fixed upon me, and turned hastily away to gaze out of the window, as if attracted by the noise of a squabble between two draymen, which fortunately broke out at the moment in the narrow, choked-up street.

"For what purpose, sir, are you instituting this eager search after my brother? It cannot be that—No, no—he has left you, you say, more than three years: besides, the bare supposition is as wicked as absurd."

"The truth is, Mr. Lloyd," rejoined Mr. Smith, after a few moments' reflection, "there is great danger that my son may disadvantageously connect himself with your—with your brother's family—may, in fact, marry his daughter Caroline. Now I could easily convince Owen"—

"Caroline!" interjected Mr. Lloyd, with a tremulous accent, and his dim eyes suffused with tears—"Caroline!—ay, truly, *her* daughter would be named Caroline." An instant after, he added, drawing himself up with an air of pride and some sternness: "Caroline Lloyd, sir, is a person who, by birth, and, I doubt not, character and attainments, is a fitting match for the son of the proudest merchant of this proud city."

"Very likely," rejoined Mr. Smith dryly; "but you must excuse me for saying that, as regards *my* son, it is one which I will at any cost prevent."

"How am I to know," observed Mr. Lloyd, whose glance of pride had quickly passed away, "that you are dealing fairly and candidly with me in the matter?"

In reply to this home-thrust, Mr. Smith placed the letter, addressed by Miss Lloyd to his son, in the

hands of the questioner, at the same time explaining how he had obtained it.

Mr. Lloyd's hands trembled, and his tears fell fast over the letter as he hurriedly perused it. It seemed by his broken, involuntary ejaculations, that old thoughts and memories were deeply stirred within him. "Poor girl;—so young, so gentle, and so sorely tried! Her mother's very turn of thought and phrase. Owen, too, artless, honourable, just as he was ever, except when the dupe of knaves and villains."

He seemed buried in thought for some time after the perusal of the letter; and Mr. Smith, whose cue it was to avoid exciting suspicion by too great eagerness of speech, was growing fidgety. At length, suddenly looking up, he said in a dejected tone, "If this is all you have ascertained, we seem as far off as ever. I can afford you no help."

"I am not sure of that," replied Mr. Smith. "Let us look calmly at the matter. Your brother is evidently not living in London, and that accounts for your advertisements not being answered."

"Truly."

"If you look at the letter attentively, you will perceive that three important words, 'in the forest,' have been partially erased."

"Yes, it is indeed so; but what"—

"Now, is there no particular locality in the country to which your brother would be likely to betake

himself in preference to another? Gentlemen of fancy and sentiment," added Mr. Smith, "usually fall back, I have heard, upon some favourite haunt of early days when pressed by adversity."

"It is natural they should," replied Mr. Lloyd, heedless of the sneer. "I have felt that longing for old haunts and old faces in intense force, even when I was what the world calls prospering in strange lands; and how much more— But no; he would not return to Wales—to Caermarthen—to be looked down upon by those amongst whom our family for so many generations stood equal with the highest. Besides, I have personally sought him there—in vain."

"But his wife—*she* is not a native of the principality?"

"No. Ah! I remember. The forest! It must be so! Caroline Heyworth, whom we first met in the Isle of Wight, is a native of Beaulieu, a village in the New Forest, Hampshire. A small, very small property there, bequeathed by an uncle, belonged to her, and perhaps has not been disposed of. How came I not to think of this before? I will set out at once—and yet pressing business requires my stay here for a day or two."

"This gentleman, Mr. Waters, can proceed to Beaulieu immediately."

"That must do then. You will call on me, Mr. Waters—here is my address—before you leave town.

Thank you. And God bless you, sir," he added, suddenly seizing Mr. Smith's hand, "for the light you have thrown upon this wearying, and I feared, hopeless search. You need not be so anxious, sir, to send a special messenger to release your son from his promise of marriage to my niece. None of us, be assured, will be desirous of forcing her upon a reluctant family." He then bowed, and withdrew.

"Mr. Waters," said Mr. Smith, with a good deal of sternness, as soon as we were alone, "I expect that no sentimental crotchet will prevent your doing your duty in this matter?"

"What right," I answered with some heat, "have you, sir, to make such an insinuation?"

"Because I perceived by your manner, that you disapproved my questioning Mr. Lloyd as to the likeliest mode of securing his brother."

"My manner but interpreted my thoughts: still, sir, I know what belongs to my duty, and shall perform it."

"Enough: I have nothing more to say."

I drew on my gloves, took up my hat, and was leaving the room, when Mr. Smith exclaimed, "Stay one moment, Mr. Waters: you see that my great object, is to break off the connection between my son and Miss Lloyd?"

"I do."

"I am not anxious, you will remember, to press the prosecution *if, by a frank written confession of his*

*guilt*, Owen Lloyd places an insuperable bar between his child and mine. You understand?"

"Perfectly. But permit me to observe, that the *duty* you just now hinted I might hesitate to perform, will not permit me to be a party to any such transaction. Good-day."

I waited on Mr. William Lloyd soon afterwards, and listened with painful interest to the brief history which he, with childlike simplicity, narrated of his own and brother's fortunes. It was a sad, oft-told tale. They had been early left orphans; and, deprived of judicious guidance, had run—William more especially—a wild career of dissipation, till *all* was gone. Just before the crash came, they had both fallen in love with the same woman, Caroline Heyworth, who had preferred the meeker, more gentle-hearted Owen, to his elder brother. They parted in anger. William obtained a situation as bailiff and overseer of an estate in Jamaica, where, by many years of toil, good fortune, and economy, he at length ruined his health and restored his fortunes; and was now returned to die rich in his native country; and, as he had till an hour before feared, unlamented and untended save by hirelings. I promised to write immediately I had seen his brother; and with a sorrowful heart took leave of the vainly-rejoicing, prematurely-aged man.

I arrived at Southampton by the night-coach—the railway was but just begun, I remember—and was

informed that the best mode of reaching Beaulieu—*Bewley*, they pronounced it—was by crossing the Southampton river to the village of *Hythe*, which was but a few miles distance from Beaulieu. As soon as I had breakfasted, I hastened to the quay, and was soon speeding across the tranquil waters in one of the sharp-stemmed wherries which plied constantly between the shores. My attention was soon arrested by two figures in the stern of the boat, a man and woman. A slight examination of their features sufficed to convince me that they were *Jones* and his wife. They evidently entertained no suspicion of pursuit; and as I heard them tell the boatmen they were going on to *Bewley*, I determined for the present not to disturb their fancied security. It was fortunate I did so. As soon as we had landed, they passed into a mean-looking dwelling, which, from some nets, and a boat under repair, in a small yard in front of it, I concluded to be a fisherman's. As no vehicle could be readily procured, I determined on walking on, and easily reached Beaulieu, which is charmingly situated just within the skirts of the New Forest, about twelve o'clock. After partaking of a slight repast at the principal inn of the place—I forget its name; but it was, I remember, within a stone's-throw of the celebrated Beaulieu Abbey ruins—I easily contrived, by a few careless, indirect questions, to elicit all the information I required of the loquacious waiting-maid. Mr. Lloyd,

who seemed to bear an excellent character, lived, I was informed, at a cottage about half a mile distant from the inn, and chiefly supported himself as a measurer of timber—beech and ash: a small stock—the oak was reserved for government purposes—he usually kept on hand. Miss Caroline, the girl said, did beautiful fancy-work; and a group of flowers painted by her, as natural as life, was framed and glazed in the bar, if I would like to see it. Upon the right track sure enough! Mr. Lloyd, there could be no longer a doubt, had unconsciously betrayed his unfortunate, guilty brother into the hands of justice, and I, an agent of the iron law, was already upon the threshold of his hiding-place! I felt no pleasure at the success of the scheme. To have bravely and honestly stood up against an adverse fate for so many years, only to fall into crime just as fortune had grown weary of persecuting him, and a long-estranged brother had returned to raise him and his to their former position in society, was melancholy indeed! And the young woman, too, whose letter breathed so pure, so gentle, so patient a spirit!—it would not bear thinking about—and I resolutely strove to look upon the affair as one of every-day routine. It would not do, however; and I was about to quit the room in no very enviable frame of mind, when my boat companions, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, entered, and seated themselves at one of the tables. The apartment was rather a large one,

and as I was seated in the corner of a box at some distance from the entrance, they did not at first observe me; and several words caught my ear which awakened a strong desire to hear more. That I might do so, I instantly adopted a very common, but not the less often very successful device. As soon as the new-comers perceived me, their whispered colloquy stopped abruptly; and after a minute or so, the man said, looking hard at me, "Good-day, sir; you have had rather a long walk;" and he glanced at my dusty boots.

"Sir," I replied, enclosing my ear with my left hand in the manner of a natural ear-trumpet, "did you speak?"

"A dusty walk," he rejoined in a voice that might have been heard in a hurricane or across Fleet Street.

"One o'clock!" I replied, pulling out my watch. "No: it wants a quarter yet."

"Deaf as the Monument," said Jones to his companion. "All right."

The suspended dialogue was but partially resumed.

"Do you think," said the woman, after the lapse of about five minutes—"do you think Owen and his family will go with us? I hope not."

"Not he: I only asked him just for the say-so of the thing. He is too chicken-hearted for that, or for anything else that requires pluck."

Finishing the spirits and water they had ordered they soon afterwards went out. I followed

As soon as we had gone about a hundred paces from the house, I said, "Pray can you tell me which is Mr. Lloyd the beech-merchant's house?"

"Yes," replied the man, taking hold of my arm, and hallooing into my ear with a power sufficient to really deafen one for life: "we are going there to dine."

I nodded comprehension, and on we journeyed. We were met at the door by Owen Lloyd himself—a man in whose countenance guilelessness, even to simplicity, seemed stamped by nature's own true hand. So much, thought I, for the reliance to be placed on physiognomy! "I have brought you a customer," said Mr. Jones: "but he is as deaf as a stone." I was courteously invited in by signs; and with much hallooing and shouting, it was finally settled that, after dinner, I should look over Mr. Lloyd's stock of wood. Dinner had just been placed on the table by Mrs. Lloyd and her daughter. A still very comely interesting woman was Mrs. Lloyd, though time and sorrow had long since set their unmistakeable seals upon her. Her daughter was, I thought, one of the most charming, graceful young women I had ever seen, spite of the tinge of sadness which dwelt upon her sweet face, deepening its interest if it somewhat diminished its beauty. My heart ached to think of the misery the announcement of my errand must presently bring on such gentle beings—innocent, I felt confident, even of the knowledge of the crime

that had been committed. I dreaded to begin—not, Heaven knows, from any fear of the men, who, compared with me, were poor, feeble creatures, and I could easily have mastered half-a-dozen such; but the females—that young girl especially—how encounter *their* despair? I mutely declined dinner, but accepted a glass of ale, and sat down till I could muster sufficient resolution for the performance of my task; for I felt this was an opportunity of quietly affecting the capture of both the suspected criminals which *must* not be neglected.

Dinner was just over when Mrs. Lloyd said, “Oh, Mr. Jones, have you seen anything of my husband’s pocket-book? It was on a shelf in the room where you slept—not the last time, but when you were here about three weeks ago. We can find it nowhere; and I thought you might possibly have taken it by mistake.”

“A black, common-looking thing?” said Jones,  
“Yes.”

“I *did* take it by mistake. I found it in one of my parcels, and put it in my pocket, intending of course to return it when I came back; but I remember, when wanting to open a lock of which I had lost the key, taking it out to see if it contained a pencil-case which I thought might answer the purpose; and finding none, tossing it away in a pet, I could not afterwards find it.”

“Then it is lost?”

"Yes; but what of that? There was nothing in it."

"You are mistaken," rejoined Owen; "there was a five-pound country note in it, and the loss will—— What is the matter, friend?"

I had sprung upon my feet with uncontrollable emotion: Mr. Lloyd's observation recalled me to myself, and I sat down again, muttering something about a sudden pain in the side.

"Oh, if that's the case," said Jones, "I'll make it up willingly. I am pretty rich, you know, just now."

"We shall be much obliged to you," said Mrs. Lloyd; "its loss would be a sad blow to us."

"How came you to send those heavy boxes here, Jones?" said Owen Lloyd. "Would it not have been better to have sent them direct to Portsmouth, where the vessel calls?"

"I had not quite made up my mind to return to America then; and I knew they would be safer here than anywhere else."

"When do you mean to take them away? We are so badly off for room, that they terribly hamper us."

"This evening, about nine o'clock. I have hired a smack at Hythe to take us, bag and baggage, down the river to meet the liner which calls off Portsmouth to-morrow. I wish we could persuade you to go with us."

"Thank you, Jones," replied Owen, in a dejected

tone, “I have very little to hope for here; still my heart clings to the old country.”

I had heard enough; and hastily rising, intimated a wish to look at the timber at once. Mr. Lloyd immediately rose, and Jones and his wife left the cottage to return to Hythe at the same time that we did. I marked a few pieces of timber, and promising to send for them in the morning, hastened away.

A mountain seemed removed from off my breast, I felt as if I had achieved a great personal deliverance. Truly a wonderful interposition of Providence, I thought, that has so signally averted the fatal consequences likely to have resulted from the thoughtless imprudence of Owen Lloyd, in allowing his house to be made, however innocently, a receptacle for stolen goods, at the solicitations, too, of a man whose character he knew to be none of the purest. He had a narrow escape, and might with perfect truth exclaim—

‘There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.’

The warrants of which I was the bearer the London police authorities had taken care to get indorsed by a magistrate of the county of Hampshire, who happened to be in London, so that I found no difficulty in arranging effectually for the capture and safe custody of Jones and his assistants when he came to fetch his booty.

I had just returned to the Beaulieu inn, after completing my arrangements, when a carriage drove

furiously up to the door, and who should, to my utter astonishment, alight, but Mr. William Lloyd, and Messrs Smith, father and son. I hastened out, and briefly enjoining caution and silence, begged them to step with me into a private room. The agitation of Mr. Lloyd and of Mr. Arthur Smith was extreme, but Mr. Smith appeared cold and impassive as ever. I soon ascertained that Arthur Smith, by his mother's assistance, I suspect, had early penetrated his father's schemes and secrets, and had, in consequence, caused Mr. William Lloyd to be watched home, with whom, immediately after I had left, he had a long conference. Later in the evening an *éclaircissement* with the father took place; and after a long and stormy discussion, it was resolved that all three should the next morning post down to Beaulieu, and act as circumstances might suggest. My story was soon told. It was received of course with unbounded joy by the brother and lover; and even through the father's apparent indifference I could perceive that his refusal to participate in the general joy would not be of long duration. The large fortune which Mr. William Lloyd intimated his intention to bestow upon his niece was a new and softening element in the affair.

Mr. Smith, senior, ordered his dinner; and Mr. Lloyd and Arthur Smith—but why need I attempt to relate what *they* did? I only know that when, a long time afterwards, I ventured to look in at Mr. Owen Lloyd's cottage, all the five inmates—brother,

uncle, lover, niece and wife—were talking, laughing weeping, smiling, like distracted creatures, and seemed utterly incapable of reasonable discourse. An hour after that, as I stood screened by a belt of forest-trees in wait for Mr. Jones and company, I noticed, as they all strolled past me in the clear moonlight, that the tears, the agitation had passed away, leaving only smiles and grateful joy on the glad faces so lately clouded by anxiety and sorrow. A mighty change in so brief a space!

Mr. Jones arrived with his cart and helpers in due time. A man who sometimes assisted in the timber-yard was deputed, with an apology for the absence of Mr. Lloyd, to deliver the goods. The boxes, full of plate and other valuables, were soon hoisted in, and the cart moved off. I let it proceed about a mile, and then, with the help I had placed in readiness, easily secured the astounded burglar and his assistants; and early the next morning Jones was on his road to London. He was tried at the ensuing Old-Bailey sessions, convicted, and transported for life; and the discretion I had exercised in not executing the warrant against Owen Lloyd was decidedly approved of by the authorities.

It was about two months after my first interview with Mr. Smith that, on returning home one evening, my wife placed before me a piece of bride-cake, and two beautifully-engraved cards united with white satin ribbon, bearing the names of Mr. and Mrs.

Arthur Smith. I was more gratified by this little act of courtesy for Emily's sake, as those who have temporarily fallen from a certain position in society will easily understand, than I should have been by the costliest present. The service I had rendered was purely accidental: it has nevertheless been always kindly remembered by all parties whom it so critically served.

# *Recollections of a Detective Police - Officer.*

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## **THE WIDOW.**

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IN the winter of 1833 I was hurriedly, and, as I at the time could not help thinking, precipitately despatched to Guernsey, one of the largest of the islands which dot the British Channel, in quest of a gentleman of, till then, high character on the Stock Exchange, who, it was alleged, had absconded with a very large sum of money intrusted to him for investment by a baronet of considerable influence in official quarters. From certain circumstances, it was surmised that Guernsey would be his first hidingplace,

and I was obliged to post all the way to Weymouth in order to save the mail packet, which left that place on the Saturday evening, or night rather, with the Channel-Island mails. Mr. —— had gone, it was conjectured, by way of Southampton. My search, promptly and zealously as I was aided by the Guernsey authorities, proving vain, I determined on going on to Jersey, when a letter arrived by post informing me that the person of whom I was in pursuit had either not intended to defraud his client, or that his heart had failed him at the threshold of crime. A few hours after I had left London he had reappeared, it seems, in his counting-house, after having a few minutes previously effected the investment of the money in accordance with his client's instructions, and was now, through his attorney, threatening the accuser and all his aiders and abettors with the agreeable processes that in England usually follow sharply at the heels of such rash and hasty proceedings.

My mission over, I proposed to retrace my steps immediately; but unfortunately found myself detained in the island for nearly a week by the hurricane-weather which suddenly set in, rendering it impossible for the mail or other steam-packets to cross the Channel during its continuance. Time limped slowly and heavily away; and frequently, in my impatience to be gone, I walked down to the bleak pier, and strained my eyes in the direction in which the steamer from Jersey *should* appear. Almost

every time I did so I encountered two persons, who, I could see, were even more impatient to be gone than myself, and probably, I thought, with much more reason. They were a widow lady, not certainly more than thirty years of age, and her son, a fine, curly-haired boy, about eight or nine years old, whose natural light-heartedness appeared to be checked, subdued, by the deep grief and sadness which trembled in his mother's fine expressive eyes, and shrouded her pale but handsome face. He held her by the hand ; often clasping it with both his tiny ones, and looking up to her as she turned despondingly away from the vacant roadstead and raging waters, with a half-frightened, half-wondering expression of anxious love, which would frequently cause his mother to bend down, and hurriedly strive to kiss away the sorrowful alarm depicted in the child's face. These two beings strangely interested me ; chiefly perhaps because, in my compelled idleness, I had little else except the obstinate and angry weather to engage my attention or occupy my thoughts. There was an unmistakeable air of "better days" about the widow —a grace of manner which her somewhat faded and unseasonable raiment rendered but the more striking and apparent. Her countenance, one perceived at the first glance, was of remarkable comeliness ; and upon one occasion that I had an opportunity of observing it, I was satisfied that, under happier influences than now appeared to oversadow her, those pale interest-

ing features would light up into beauty as brilliant as it was refined and intellectual.

This introduces another walking mystery, which, for want of something better to do, I was conjuring out of my fellow-watchers on the pier. He was a stoutish, strongly-set man of forty years of age, perhaps scarcely so much, showily dressed in new, glossy clothes; French-varnished boots, thin-soled enough, winter as it was, for a drawing-room; hat of the latest *gent* fashion; a variegated satin cravat, fastened by two enormous-headed gold pins, connected with a chain; and a heavy gold chain fastened from his watch waistcoat-pocket over his neck. The complexion of his face was a cadaverous white, liberally sprinkled and relieved with gin and brandy blossoms, whilst the coarseness of his not over-clean hands was with singular taste set off and displayed by some half-dozen glittering rings. I felt a growing conviction, especially on noticing a sudden change in the usual cunning, impudent, leering expression of his eyes, as he caught me looking at him with some earnestness, that I had somewhere had the honour of a previous introduction to him. That he had not been, lately at all events, used to such resplendent habiliments as he now sported, was abundantly evident from his numerous smirking self-surveys as he strutted jauntily along, and frequent stoppings before shops that, having mirrors in their windows, afforded a more complete view of his charming person. This creature

I was convinced was in some way or other connected, or at any rate acquainted, with the young and graceful widow. He was constantly dogging her steps ; and I noticed with surprise, and some little irritation, that his vulgar bow was faintly returned by the lady as they passed each other ; and that her recognition of him, slight and distant as it was, was not unfrequently accompanied by a blush, whether arising from a pleasurable emotion or the reverse I could not for some time determine. There is a mystery about blushes, I was, and am quite aware, not easily penetrable, more especially about those of widows. I was soon enlightened upon that point. One day, when she happened to be standing alone on the pier, her little boy was gazing through a telescope I had borrowed of the landlord of the hotel where I lodged —he approached, and before she was well aware of his intention, took her hand, uttering at the same time, it seemed, some words of compliment. It was then I observed her features literally flash with a vividness of expression which revealed a beauty I had not before imagined she possessed. The fellow absolutely recoiled before the concentrated scorn which flushed her pale features, and the indignant gesture with which she withdrew her hand from the contamination of his touch. As he turned confusedly and hastily away, his eyes encountered mine, and he muttered some unintelligible sentences, during which the widow and her son left the spot.

"The lady," said I, as soon as she was out of hearing, "seems in a cold, bitter humour this morning; not unlike the weather."

"Yes, Mr. Wat—— I beg pardon, Mr. What's-your-name, I would say?"

"Waters, as I perceive you know quite well. My recollection of you is not so distinct. I have no remembrance of the fashionable clothes and brilliant jewellery, none whatever; but the remarkable countenance I *have* seen."

"I dare say you have, Waters," he replied, reassuming his insolent, swaggering air. "I practise at the Old Bailey; and I have several times seen you there, not, as now, in the masquerade of a gentleman, but with a number on your collar."

I was silly enough to feel annoyed for a moment at the fellow's stupid sarcasm, and turned angrily away.

"There, don't fly into a passion," continued he, with an exulting chuckle. "I have no wish to be ill friends with so smart a hand as you are. What do you say to a glass or two of wine, if only to keep this confounded wind out of our stomachs? It's cheap enough here."

I hesitated a few seconds, and then said, "I have no great objection; but first, whom have I the honour of addressing?"

"Mr. Gates. William Gates, *Esquire*, attorney-at-law."

"Gates! Not the Gates, I hope, in the late Bryant affair?"

"Well—yes; but allow me to say, Waters, that the observations of the judge on that matter, and the consequent proceedings, were quite unjustifiable; and I was strongly advised to petition the House on the subject; but I forbore, perhaps unwisely."

"From consideration chiefly, I dare say, for the age and infirmities of his lordship, and his numerous family?"

"Come, come," rejoined Gates, with a laugh; "don't poke fun in that way. The truth is, I get on quite as well without as with the certificate. I transact business now for Mr. Everard Preston: you understand?"

"Perfectly. I now remember where I have seen you. But how is it your dress has become so suddenly changed? A few weeks ago, it was nothing like so magnificent."

"True, my dear boy, true: quite right. I saw you observed that. First-rate, isn't it? Every article genuine. Bond and Regent Street, I assure you," he added, scanning himself complacently over. I nodded approval, and he went on—"You see I have had a windfall; a piece of remarkable luck; and so I thought I would escape out of the dingy, smoky village, and air myself for a few days in the Channel."

"A delightful time of the year for such a purpose

truly. Rather say you came to improve your acquaintance with the lady yonder, who, I dare say, will not prove ultimately inflexible."

"Perhaps you are right—a little at least you may be, about the edges. But here we are; what do you take—port?"

"That as soon as anything else."

Mr. Gates was, as he said, constitutionally thirsty and although it was still early in the day, drank with great relish and industry. As he grew flushed and rosy, and I therefore imagined communicative, I said, "Well, now, tell me who and what is that lady?"

The reply was a significant compound gesture, comprising a wink of his left eye and the tap of a forefinger upon the right side of his nose. I waited, but the pantomimic action remained uninterpreted by words.

"Not rich, apparently?"

"Poor as Job."

"An imprudent marriage, probably?"

"Guess again, and I'll take odds you'll guess wrong; but suppose, as variety is charming, we change the subject. What is your opinion now of the prospects of the Ministry?"

I saw it was useless attempting to extract any information from so cunning a rascal; and hastily excusing myself, I rose, and abruptly took my leave, more and more puzzled to account for the evident connection, in some way or other, of so fair and

elegant a woman with a low attorney, struck off the rolls for fraudulent misconduct, and now acting in the name of a person scarcely less disreputable than himself. On emerging from the tavern, I found that the wind had not only sensibly abated, but had become more favourable to the packet's leaving Jersey, and that early the next morning we might reasonably hope to embark for Weymouth. It turned out as we anticipated. The same boat which took me off to the roads conveyed also the widow—Mrs. Grey, I saw by the cards on her modest luggage—and her son. Gates followed a few minutes afterwards, and we were soon on our stormy voyage homewards.

The passage was a very rough, unpleasant one, and I saw little of the passengers in whom, in spite of myself, as it were, I continued to feel so strong an interest, till the steamer was moored alongside the Weymouth quay, and we stood together for a brief space, awaiting the scrutiny and questionings of the officers of the customs. I bowed adieu as I stepped from the paddle-box to the shore, and thought, with something of a feeling of regret, that in all probability I should never see either of them again. I was mistaken, for on arriving early the next morning to take possession of the outside place booked for me by the coach to London through Southampton, I found Mrs. Grey and her son already seated on the roof. Gates came hurriedly a few minutes afterwards, and ensconced himself snugly inside. The day was

bitterly cold, and the widow and her somewhat delicate-looking boy were but poorly clad for such inclement weather. The coachman and myself, however, contrived to force some rough, stout cloaks upon their acceptance, which sufficed pretty well during the day; but as night came on rainy and tempestuous, as well as dark and bleak, I felt that they must be in some way or other got inside, where Gates was the only passenger. Yet so distant, so frigidly courteous was Mrs. Grey, that I was at a loss how to manage it. Gates, I saw, was enjoying himself hugely to his own satisfaction. At every stage he swallowed a large glass of brandy-and-water, and I observed that he cast more and more audaciously-triumphant glances towards Mrs. Grey. Once her eye, though studiously, I thought, averted from him, caught his, and a deep blush, in which fear, timidity, and aversion seemed strangely mingled, swept over her face. What *could* it mean? It was, however, useless to worry myself further with profitless conjectures, and I descended from the roof to hold a private parley with the coachman. A reasonable bargain was soon struck: he went to Mrs. Grey and proposed to her, as there was plenty of room to spare, that she and her son should ride inside.

"It will make no difference in the fare," he added, "and it's bitter cold out here for a lady."

"Thank you," replied the widow after a few moments' hesitation; "we shall do very well here."

I guessed the cause of her refusal, and hastened to add, “ You had better, I think, accept the coachman’s proposal: the night-weather will be dreadful, and even I, a man, must take refuge inside.” She looked at me with a sort of grateful curiosity, and then accepted, with many thanks, the coachman’s offer.

When we alighted at the Regent Circus, London, I looked anxiously but vainly round for some one in attendance to receive and greet the widow and her son. She did not seem to expect any one, but stood gazing vacantly, yet sadly, at the noisy, glaring, hurrying scene around her, her child’s hand clasped in hers with an unconsciously tightening grasp, whilst her luggage was removed from the roof of the coach. Gates stood near, as if in expectation that his services must now, however unwillingly, be accepted by Mrs. Grey. I approached her, and said somewhat hurriedly, “ If, as I apprehend, madam, you are a stranger in London, and consequently in need of temporary lodgings, you will, I think, do well to apply to the person whose address I have written on this card. It is close by. He knows me, and on your mentioning my name, will treat you with every consideration. I am a police-officer; here is my address; and any assistance in my power shall, in any case,” and I glanced at Gates, “ be freely rendered to you.” I then hastened off; and my wife an hour afterwards was even more anxious and interested for the mysterious widow and her son than myself.

About six weeks had glided away, and the remembrance of my fellow-passengers from Guernsey was rapidly fading into indistinctness, when a visit from Roberts, to whose lodgings I had recommended Mrs. Grey, brought them once more painfully before me. That the widow was poor I was not surprised to hear; but that a person so utterly destitute of resources and friends, as she appeared from Roberts' account to be, should have sought the huge wilderness of London, seemed marvellous. Her few trinkets, and nearly all her scanty wardrobe, Roberts more than suspected were at the pawnbroker's. The rent of the lodgings had not been paid for the last month, and he believed that for some time past they had not had a sufficiency of food, and were *now* in a state of literal starvation! Still, she was cold and distant as ever, complained not, though daily becoming paler, thinner, weaker.

"Does Gates the attorney visit her?" I asked.

"No—she would not see him, but letters from him are almost daily received."

Roberts, who was a widower, wished my wife to see her: he was seriously apprehensive of some tragical result; and this, apart from considerations of humanity, could not be permitted for his own sake to occur in his house. I acquiesced; and Emily hurriedly equipped herself, and set off with Roberts to Sherrard Street, Haymarket.

On arriving at home, Roberts, to his own and my wife's astonishment, found Gates there in a state of

exuberant satisfaction. He was waiting to pay any claim Roberts had upon Mrs. Grey, to whom, the ex-attorney exultingly announced, he was to be married on the following Thursday! Roberts, scarcely believing his ears, hastened up to the first floor, to ascertain if Mrs. Grey had really given authority to Gates to act for her. He tapped at the door, and a faint voice bidding him enter, he saw at once what had happened. Mrs. Grey, pale as marble, her eyes flashing with almost insane excitement, was standing by a table, upon which a large tray had been placed covered with soups, jellies, and other delicacies, evidently just brought in from a tavern, eagerly watching her son partake of the first food he had tasted for two whole days! Roberts saw clearly how it was, and stammering a foolish excuse of having tapped at the wrong door, hastened away. She had at last determined to sacrifice herself to save her child's life! Emily, as she related what she had seen and heard, wept with passionate grief, and I was scarcely less excited: the union of Mrs. Grey with such a man seemed like the profanation of a pure and holy shrine. Then Gates was, spite of his windfall, as he called it, essentially a needy man! Besides—and this was the impenetrable mystery of the affair—what inducement, what motive could induce a mercenary wretch like Gates to unite himself in marriage with poverty—with destitution? The notion of his being influenced by sentiment of any kind was, I felt,

absurd. The more I reflected on the matter, the more convinced I became that there was some villainous scheme in process of accomplishment by Gates, and I determined to make at least one resolute effort to arrive at a solution of the perplexing riddle. The next day, having a few hours to spare, the thought struck me that I would call on Mrs. Grey myself. I accordingly proceeded towards her residence, and in Coventry Street happened to meet Jackson, a brother officer, who, I was aware from a few inquiries I had previously made, knew something of Gates's past history and present position. After circumstantially relating the whole matter, I asked him if he could possibly guess what the fellow's object could be in contracting such a marriage ?

"Object!" replied Jackson; "why, money of course : what else ? He has by some means become aware that the lady is entitled to property, and he is scheming to get possession of it as her husband."

"My own conviction ! Yet the difficulty of getting at any proof seems insurmountable."

"Just so. And, by the way, Gates is certainly in high feather just now, however acquired. Not only himself, but Rivers his cad, clerk he calls himself, has cast his old greasy skin, and appears quite spruce and shining. And—now I remember—what did you say was the lady's name ?"

"Grey."

"Grey ! Ah, then I suppose it can have nothing

to do with it ! It was a person of the name of Welton or Skelton that called on us a month or two ago about Gates."

" What was the nature of the communication ?"

" I can hardly tell you : the charge was so loosely made, and hurriedly withdrawn. Skelton—yes, it *was* Skelton—he resides in pretty good style at Knightsbridge—called and said that Gates had stolen a cheque or draft for five hundred pounds, and other articles sent through him to some house in the city, of which I think he said the principal was dead. He was advised to apply through a solicitor to a magistrate, and went away, we supposed, for that purpose ; but about three hours afterwards he returned, and in a hurried, flurried sort of way said he had been mistaken, and that he withdrew every charge he had made against Mr. Gates."

" Very odd."

" Yes ; but I don't see how it can be in any way connected with this Mrs. Grey's affair. Still do you think it would be of any use to sound Rivers ? I know the fellow well, and where I should be pretty sure to find him this evening."

It was arranged he should do so, and I proceeded on to Sherrard Street. Mrs. Grey was alone in the front apartment of the ground-floor, and received me with much politeness. She had, I saw, been weeping ; her eyes were swollen and bloodshot ; and she was deadly pale ; but I looked in vain for any indication

of that utter desolation which a woman like her, condemned to such a sacrifice, might naturally be supposed to feel. I felt greatly embarrassed as to how to begin; but at length I plunged boldly into the matter; assured her she was cruelly deceived by Gates, who was in no condition to provide for her and her son in even tolerable comfort; and that I was convinced he had no other than a mercenary and detestable motive in seeking marriage with her. Mrs. Grey heard me in so totally unmoved a manner, and the feeling that I was really meddling with things that did not at all concern me, grew upon me so rapidly, as I spoke to that unanswering countenance, that by the time I had finished my eloquent harangue, I was in a perfect fever of embarrassment and confusion, and very heartily wished myself out of the place. To my further bewilderment, Mrs. Grey, when I had quite concluded, informed me—in consideration, she said, of the courtesies I had shown her when we were fellow-travellers—that she was perfectly aware Mr. Gates' motive in marrying her was purely a mercenary one; and her own in consenting to the union, except as regarded her son, was, she admitted, scarcely better. She added—riddle upon riddles!—that she knew also that Mr. Gates was very poor—insolvent, she understood. I rose mechanically to my feet, with a confused notion swimming in my head that both of us at all events could not be in our right senses. This feeling must have been visible

upon my face; for Mrs. Grey added with a half-smile, “ You cannot reconcile these apparent contradictions; be patient; you will perfectly comprehend them before long. But as I wish not to stand too low in your estimation, I must tell you that Mr. Gates is to subscribe a written agreement that we separate the instant the ceremony has been performed. But for that undertaking, I would have suffered any extremity, death itself, rather than have consented to marry him !”

Still, confused, stunned as it were, by what I had heard, my hand was on the handle of the door to let myself out, when a thought arose in my mind. “ Is it possible, Mrs. Grey,” I said, “ that you can have been deceived into a belief that such a promise, however formally set down, is of the slightest legal value?—that the law recognises, or would enforce, an instrument to render nugatory the solemn obligation you will, after signing it, make, ‘ to love, honour, obey, and cherish your husband?’ ” I had found the right chord at last. Mrs. Grey, as I spoke, became deadly pale; and had she not caught at one of the heavy chairs, she would have been unable to support herself.

“ Do I understand you to say,” she faintly and brokenly gasped, “ that such an agreement as I have indicated, duly sealed and witnessed, could not be summarily enforced by a magistrate ?”

“ Certainly it could not, my dear madam, and well

Gates knows it to be so ; and I am greatly mistaken in the man, if, once the irrevocable ceremony over, he would not be the first to deride your credulity."

"If that be so," exclaimed the unfortunate lady, with passionate despair, "I am indeed ruined—lost ! Oh, my darling boy, would that you and I were sleeping in your father's quiet grave!"

"Say not so," I exclaimed with emotion, for I was afflicted by her distress. "Honour me with your confidence, and all may yet be well."

After much entreaty, she despairingly complied. The substance of her story, which was broken by frequent outbursts of grief and lamentation, was as follows :—She was the only child of a London merchant—Mr. Walton we will call him—who had lived beyond his means, and failed ruinously to an immense amount. His spirits and health were broken by this event, which he survived only a few months. It happened that about the time of the bankruptcy she had become acquainted with Mr. John Grey, the only son of an eminent East India merchant, but a man of penurious disposition and habits.

"Mr. Ezekiel Grey?"

The same. They became attached to each other, deeply so ; and knowing that to solicit the elder Grey's consent to their union would be tantamount to a sentence of immediate separation and estrangement, they unwisely, thoughtlessly, married, about ten months after Mr. Walton's death, without the

elder Grey's knowledge. Gates, an attorney, then in apparently fair circumstances, with whom young Mr. Grey had become acquainted, and Anne Crawford, Maria Walton's servant, were the witnesses of the ceremony, which, after due publication of banns, was celebrated in St. Giles's church. The young couple, after the marriage, lived in the strictest privacy, the wife meagrely supported by the pocket-money allowance of Mr. Ezekiel Grey to his son. Thus painfully elapsed nine years of life, when, about twelve months previous to the present time, Mr. Grey determined to send his son to Bombay, in order to the arrangement of some complicated claims on a house of agency there. It was decided that, during her husband's absence, Mrs. John Grey should reside in Guernsey, partly with a view to economy, and partly for the change of air, which it was said their son required—Mr. Gates to be the medium through which money and letters were to reach the wife. Mr. Ezekiel Grey died somewhat suddenly about four months after his son's departure from England, and Mrs. Grey had been in momentary expectation of the arrival of her husband, when Gates came to Guernsey, and announced his death at Bombay, just as he was preparing for the voyage to England! The manner of Gates was strange and insolent; and he plainly intimated that without his assistance both herself and child would be beggars; and that assistance he audaciously declared he would only afford at the

price of marriage ! Mrs. Grey, overwhelmed with grief for the loss of a husband by whom she had been as constantly as tenderly beloved, and dizzy with ill-defined apprehension, started at once for London. A copy of the will of Mr. Ezekiel Grey had been procured, by which in effect he devised all his estate, real and personal, to his son ; but in the event of Mr. John Grey dying unmarried, or without lawful issue, it went to his wife's nephew, Mr. Skelton—

“ Skelton of Knightsbridge ?”

Yes : in case of Mr. John Grey marrying, Skelton was to be paid an immediate legacy of five thousand pounds. So far, then, as fortune went, the widow and her son seemed amply provided for. So Mrs. Grey thought till she had another interview with Gates, who unblushingly told her that unless she consented to marry him, he would not prove, though he had abundant means of doing so, that the person she had married at St. Giles’s church was the son of Ezekiel Grey, the eminent merchant ! “ The name,” said the scoundrel, “ will not help you ; there are plenty of John Greys on that register ; and as for Anne Crawford, she has been long since dead.” Mrs. Grey next called on Mr. Skelton, and was turned out of the house as an impostor ; and finally, having parted with everything upon which she could raise money, and Gates reiterating his offer, or demand rather, accompanied by the proposal of an immediate separation, she **had consented.**

"Courage, madam!" I exclaimed at the end of her narrative, of which the above is the substance, and I spoke in a tone of joyous confidence, which, more than my words, reassured her: "I already see glimpses of daylight through this maze of villainy. Gates has played a desperate game certainly, but one which we shall, you may rely on it, easily baffle."

A knock at the door interrupted me: I peered through the blind, and saw that it was Gates: "Silence—secrecy!" I emphatically urged in a low voice and with my finger on my lip, and left the room before the street door could be answered; and by my friend Roberts' contrivance, I was in a few minutes afterwards in the street, all the time unobserved by the intruder.

The next day early Jackson called on me. He had seen Rivers, but he seemed to know nothing, except, indeed, that it was quite true Gates had received a five hundred pound draft from a house in India, which he, Rivers, had got notes for at the Bank of England. There were also in the same parcel a gold watch, he knew, and some jewellery, but from whom it all came, he, Rivers, was ignorant. Nothing but that had Jackson been able to discover.

"Call you that nothing?" said I, starting up, and hastily swallowing my last cup of coffee. "It is enough, at all events, to transport William Gates, Esquire."

I had to wait that morning on especial business on

the commissioner ; and after the business upon which I had been summoned had been despatched, I related the case of Grey *versus* Gates as clearly and succinctly as I could. He listened with great attention, and in about a quarter of an hour I left him with as clear and unmistakable a path before me as it was possible to desire. I was passing down the stairs when I was re-summoned.

“ You quite understand, Waters, that Skelton is not for a moment to be lost sight of till his deposition has been taken ”

“ Certainly, sir.”

“ That will do then.”

Arrived at home, I despatched my wife in a cab for Mrs. Grey. She soon arrived, and as much as was necessary of our plan I confided to her. Mr. Gates had pressed her earnestly that the ceremony should take place on the following morning, By my directions she now wrote, although her trembling fingers made an almost unintelligible scrawl of it, that as it was to be, she agreed to his proposition, and should expect him at nine o’clock.

Two hours afterwards, Jackson and I, having previously watched the gentleman home, knocked at Mr. Skelton’s house, Knightsbridge, and requested to see him. At the very moment, he came out of a side-room, and was proceeding up stairs.

“ Mr. Skelton,” said I, stepping forward, “ I must have a private interview with you !” He was in an

instant as pale as a corpse, and shaking like an aspen—such miserable cowards does an evil conscience make men—and totteringly led the way, without speaking, to a small library.

“ You know me, Mr. Skelton, and doubtless guess the meaning of my errand ?”

He stammered out a denial, which his trembling accents and ashy countenance emphatically denied.

“ You and Gates of the Minories are engaged in a felonious conspiracy to deprive Mrs. Grey and her infant son of their property and inheritance !”

Had he been struck by a cannon-shot, he could not have fallen more suddenly and helplessly upon the couch close to which he was standing.

“ My God !” he exclaimed, “ what is this ?”

Perceiving he was quite sufficiently frightened, I said, “ There is no wish on Mrs. Grey’s part to treat you harshly, so that you aid us in convicting Gates. For this purpose, you must at once give the numbers of the notes Gates obtained for the cheque, and also the letter in which the agent at Bombay announced its transmission through Gates.”

“ Yes—yes !” he stammered, rising, and going to a secrétaire. “ There is the letter.”

I glanced over it. “ I am glad to find,” I said, “ that you did not know by this letter that the money and other articles here enumerated had been sent by the dying husband to his wife through Gates.”

"I most solemnly assure you I did not!" he eagerly replied; "until—until—"

"Mr. Gates informed you of it, and seduced you to conspire with him. He has been playing a double game. Whilst amusing you, he purposed marrying Mrs. Grey to-morrow morning!"

"Is it possible? But I suspected——"

"No doubt. In the meantime, you will, if you please, accompany us. There is every desire to spare you," I added, perceiving him hesitate; "but our orders are peremptory." With a very ill grace Mr. Skelton complied, and we were rapidly driven off.

The next morning Jackson, Skelton, and myself, were in Sherrard Street before daybreak. Mrs. Grey was already up, and at eight o'clock we sat down with her and her son to an excellent breakfast. She was charmingly dressed in the wedding garments which Gates had purchased with her stolen money, and I almost felt it in my heart to pity the unfortunate bridegroom, rascal as he was, about to be suddenly disappointed of such a bride and such a fortune! It was very necessary that she should be so arrayed, for, as we had thought quite probable, Rivers called a few minutes past eight with a present of jewellery, and the bride's appearance must have completely disarmed any suspicion which his master might have entertained.

Breakfast was over: Mrs. Grey, with her son, was seated on a couch in the front room, and we were

lying *perdu* in the next apartment, separated only by folding doors, when a coach drew up before the house ; a bridegroom's impatient summons thundered at the door ; and presently forth stepped Mr. Gates, resplendently attired, followed by his man Rivers, who was, it appeared, to give the bride away. Mr. Gates entered the presence of beautiful Mrs. Grey in immense triumph. He approached her with the profoundest gallantry : and was about to speak, when Jackson and I, who had been sedulously watching through the chink of the slightly-opened doors, advanced into the room, followed by Mr. Skelton. His attitude of terror and surprise was one of the most natural performances I ever witnessed. He turned instinctively as if to flee. My grasp was in an instant on his collar.

“The game is up, my good Mr. Gates : I arrest you for felony !”

“Felony !”

“Ah, truly. For stealing a gold watch, diamond pin, and a cheque for five hundred pounds, sent through you to this lady.”

All his insolent swagger vanished in an instant, and the abject scoundrel threw himself at Mrs. Grey's feet, and absolutely howled for mercy.

“I will do anything,” he gaspingly protested ; “anything you require, so that you will save me from these men !”

“Where is Crawford ?” I asked, desirous of taking

immediate, but not, I hope, unfair, advantage of the rascal's terror; "she who witnessed this lady's marriage?"

"At Leamington, Warwickshire," he replied.

"Very good. Now, Mrs. Grey, if you will leave us, I shall be obliged. We must search this gentleman, and perhaps"— She vanished in an instant: her gentleness of disposition was, I saw, rapidly mastering all resentment. I carried the watch we took out of Gates' pocket to her, and she instantly recognised it to be her husband's. A fifty and a twenty-pound bank-note, corresponding to the numbers on our list, we extricated from the disappointed bridegroom's pocket-book. "And now, sir, if you please," said I, "we will adjourn to your lodgings." A savage scowl was his only reply, not at all discomposing to me, and we were soon busy ransacking his hidden hoards. We found several other articles sent by Mr. John Grey to his wife, and three letters to her, which, as corroborative evidence, would leave no doubt as to *who* her husband was. Our next visit was to a police court, where Mr. William Gates was fully committed for trial. He was in due time convicted of stealing the watch, and sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Mrs. Grey's marriage, and her son's consequent succession to the deceased merchant's wealth, were not disputed. She has never remarried, and lives now in beneficent affluence in one of the new squares

beyond the Edgeware Road with her son, who, though now six-and-twenty years of age, or thereabouts, is still unappropriated ; but “the good time is coming,” so at least hinted a few days ago the fashionable “Morning Post.”

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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## THE TWINS.

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THE records of police courts afford but imperfect evidence of the business really effected by the officers attached to them. The machinery of English criminal law is, in practice, so subservient to the caprice of individual prosecutors, that instances are constantly occurring in which flagrant violations of natural justice are, from various motives, corrupt and otherwise, withdrawn not only from the cognisance of judicial authority, but from the reprobation of public opinion. Compromises are usually effected

between the apprehension of the inculpated parties and the public examination before a magistrate. The object of prosecution has been perhaps obtained by the preliminary step of arrest, or a criminal understanding has been arrived at in the interval; and it is then found utterly hopeless to proceed, however manifest may have appeared the guilt of the prisoner. If you adopt the expedient of compelling the attendance of the accused, it is, in nine cases out of ten, mere time and trouble thrown away. The utter forgetfulness of memory, the loose recollection of facts so vividly remembered but a few hours before, the delicately-scrupulous hesitation to depose confidently to the clearest verities evinced by the reluctant prosecutor, render a conviction almost impossible; so that, except in cases of flagrant and startling crimes, which are of course earnestly prosecuted by the Crown lawyers, offences against "our sovereign lady the Queen, her Crown, and dignity," as criminal indictments run, if no aggrieved subject voluntarily appears to challenge justice in behalf of his liege lady, remain unchastised, and not unfrequently unexposed. From several examples of this prevalent abuse which have come within my own knowledge, I select the following instance, merely changing the names of the parties:—

My services, the superintendent late one afternoon informed me, were required in a perplexed and entangled affair, which would probably occupy me

for some time, as orders had been given to investigate the matter thoroughly. "There," he added, "is a Mr. Repton, a highly-respectable country solicitor's card. He is from Lancashire, and is staying at Webb's Hotel, Piccadilly. You are to see him at once. He will put you in possession of all the facts —surmises rather, I should say, for the facts, to my apprehension, are scant enough—connected with the case, and you will then use all possible diligence to ascertain, first, if the alleged crime has been really committed, and if so, of course to bring the criminal or criminals to justice."

I found Mr. Repton, a stout, bald-headed, gentlemanly person, apparently about sixty years of age, just in the act of going out. "I have a pressing engagement for this evening, Mr. Waters," said he, after glancing at the introductory note I had brought, "and cannot possibly go into the business with the attention and minuteness it requires till the morning. But I'll tell you what: one of the parties concerned, and the one, too, with whom you will have especially to deal, is, I know, to be at Covent Garden Theatre this evening. It is of course necessary that you should be thoroughly acquainted with his person; and if you will go with me in the cab that is waiting outside, I will step with you into the theatre, and point him out." I assented; and on entering Covent Garden pit, Mr. Repton, who kept behind me, to avoid observation, directed my attention to a group

of persons occupying the front seats of the third box in the lower tier from the stage, on the right-hand side of the house. They were—a gentleman of about thirty years of age; his wife, a very elegant person, a year or two younger; and three children, the eldest of whom, a boy, could not have been more than six or seven years old. This done, Mr. Repton left the theatre, and about two hours afterwards I did the same.

The next morning I breakfasted with the Lancashire solicitor by appointment. As soon as it was concluded, business was at once entered upon.

"You closely observed Sir Charles Malvern yesterday evening, I presume?" said Mr. Repton.

"I paid great attention to the gentleman you pointed out to me," I answered, "if he be Sir Charles Malvern."

"He is, or at least— But of that presently. First let me inform you that Malvern, a few months ago, was a beggared gamester, or nearly so, to speak with precision. He is now in good bodily health, has a charming wife, and a family to whom he is much attached, an unencumbered estate of about twelve thousand a-year, and has not gambled since he came into possession of the property. This premised, is there, think you, anything remarkable in Sir Charles's demeanour?"

"Singularly so. My impression was, that he was labouring under a terrible depression of spirits,

caused, I imagined, by pecuniary difficulties. His manner was restless, abstracted. He paid no attention whatever to anything going on on the stage, except when his wife or one of the children especially challenged his attention; and then, a brief answer returned, he relapsed into the same restless unob servance as before. He is very nervous too. The box door was suddenly opened once or twice, and I noticed his sudden start each time."

" You have exactly described him. Well, that perturbed, unquiet feverishness of manner has constantly distinguished him since his accession to the Redwood estates, and only since then. It strengthens me and one or two others in possibly an unfounded suspicion, which—— But I had better, if I wish to render myself intelligible, relate matters in due sequence.

" Sir Thomas Redwood, whose property in Lancashire is chiefly in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, met his death, as did his only son Mr. Archibald Redwood, about six months ago, in a very sudden and shocking manner. They were out trying a splendid mare for the first time in harness which Sir Thomas had lately purchased at a very high price. Two grooms on horseback were in attendance, to render assistance if required, for the animal was a very powerful, high-spirited one. All went very well till they arrived in front of Mr. Meredith's place, Oak Villa. This gentleman has a passion for

firing off a number of brass cannon on the anniversary of such events as he deems worthy of the honour. This happened, unfortunately, to be one of Mr. Meredith's gunpowder days; and as Sir Thomas and his son were passing, a stream of light flashed directly in the eyes of the mare, followed by the roar of artillery, at no more than about ten paces off. The terrified animal became instantly unmanageable, got the bit between her teeth, and darted off at the wildest speed. The road is a curved and rugged one; and after tearing along for about half a mile, the off-wheel of the gig came, at an abrupt turn, full against a milestone. The tremendous shock hurled the two unfortunate gentlemen upon the road with frightful violence, tore the vehicle almost completely asunder, and so injured the mare, that she died the next day. The alarmed grooms, who had not only been unable to render assistance, but even to keep up with the terrified mare, found Mr. Archibald Redwood quite dead. The spine had been broken close to the nape of the neck: his head, in fact, was doubled up, so to speak, under the body. Sir Thomas still breathed, and was conveyed to Redwood Man-house. Surgical assistance was promptly obtained; but the internal injuries were so great, that the excellent old gentleman expired in a few hours after he had reached his home. I was hastily sent for; and when I arrived, Sir Thomas was still fully conscious. He imparted to me matters of great

moment, to which he requested I would direct, after his decease, my best care and attention. His son, I was aware, had but just returned from a tour on the Continent, where he had been absent for nearly a twelvemonth; but I was not aware, neither was his father till the day before his death, that Mr. Archibald Redwood had not only secretly espoused a Miss Ashton—of a reduced family, but belonging to our best gentry—but had returned home, not solely for the purpose of soliciting Sir Thomas's forgiveness of his unauthorised espousals, but that the probable heir of Redwood might be born within the walls of the ancient manor-house. After the first burst of passion and surprise, Sir Thomas, one of the best-hearted men in the universe, cordially forgave his son's disobedience—partly, and quite rightly, imputing it to his own foolish urgency in pressing a union with one of the Lacy family, with which the baronet was very intimate, and whose estate joined his.

“ Well, this lady, now a widow, had been left by her husband at Chester, whilst he came on to seek an explanation with his father. Mr. Archibald Redwood was to have set out the next morning in one of Sir Thomas's carriages to bring home his wife; and the baronet, with his dying breath, bade me assure her of his entire forgiveness, and his earnest hope and trust that through her offspring the race of the Redwoods might be continued in a direct

line. The family estates, I should tell you, being strictly entailed on heirs-male, devolved, if no son of Mr. Archibald Redwood should bar his claim, upon Charles Malvern, the son of a cousin of the late Sir Thomas Redwood. The baronet had always felt partiality towards Malvern, and had assisted him pecuniarily a hundred times. Sir Thomas also directed me to draw as quickly as I could a short will bequeathing Mr. Charles Malvern twenty thousand pounds out of the personals. I wrote as expeditiously as I could, but by the time the paper was ready for his signature, Sir Thomas was no longer conscious. I placed the pen in his hand, and I fancied he understood the purpose, for his fingers closed faintly upon it; but the power to guide was utterly gone, and only a slight, scrambling stroke marked the paper as the pen slid across it in the direction of the falling arm.

“Mr. Malvern arrived at the manor-house about an hour after Sir Thomas breathed his last. It was clearly apparent through all his sorrow, partly real, I have no doubt, as well as partly assumed, that joy, the joy of riches, splendour, station, was dancing at his heart, and, spite of all his efforts to subdue or conceal it, sparkling in his eye. I briefly, but as gently as I could, acquainted him with the true position of affairs. The revulsion of feeling which ensued entirely unmanned him; and it was not till an hour afterwards that he recovered his self-posses-

sion sufficiently to converse reasonably and coolly upon his position. At last he became apparently reconciled to the sudden overclouding of his imaginatively-brilliant prospects, and it was agreed that as he was a relative of the widow, he should at once set off to break the sad news to her. Well, a few days after his departure, I received a letter from him, stating that Lady Redwood—I don't think, by the way, that, as her husband died before succeeding to the baronetcy, she is entitled to that appellation of honour; we, however, call her so out of courtesy—that Lady Redwood, though prematurely confined in consequence of the intelligence of her husband's untimely death, had given birth to a female child, and that both mother and daughter were as well as could be expected. This, you will agree, seemed perfectly satisfactory?"

"Entirely so."

"So I thought. Mr. Malvern was now unquestionably, whether Sir Charles Malvern or not, the proprietor of the Redwood estates, burthened as with a charge, in accordance with the conditions of the entails, of a thousand pounds life annuity to the late Mr. Redwood's infant daughter.

"Sir Charles returned to Redwood manor-house, where his wife and family soon afterwards arrived. Lady Redwood had been joined, I understood, by her mother, Mrs. Ashton, and would, when able to undertake the journey, return to her maternal home. It

was about two months after Sir Thomas Redwood's death that I determined to pay Lady Redwood a visit, in order to the winding up of the personal estate, which it was desirable to accomplish as speedily as possible; and then a new and terrible light flashed upon me."

"What, in heaven's name!" I exclaimed, for the first time breaking silence—"what could there be to reveal?"

"Only," rejoined Mr. Repton, "that ill, delirious, as Lady Redwood admitted herself to have been, it was her intimate, unconquerable conviction *that she had given birth to twins!*"

"Good God! And you suspect"—

"We don't know what to suspect. Should the lady's confident belief be correct, the missing child might have been a boy. You understand?"

"I do. But is there any tangible evidence to justify this horrible suspicion?"

"Yes; the surgeon-apothecary and his wife, a Mr. and Mrs. Williams, who attended Lady Redwood, have suddenly disappeared from Chester, and, from no explainable motive, having left or abandoned a fair business there."

"That has certainly an ugly look."

"True; and a few days ago I received information that Williams has been seen in Birmingham. He was well dressed, and not apparently in any business."

"There certainly appears some ground for suspicion. What plan of operations do you propose?"

"That," replied Mr. Repton, "I must leave to your more practised sagacity. I can only undertake that no means shall be lacking that may be required."

"It will be better, perhaps," I suggested, after an interval of reflection, "that I should proceed to Birmingham at once. You have of course an accurate description of the persons of Williams and his wife ready?"

"I have; and very accurate pen-and-ink sketches I am told they are. Besides these, I have also here," continued Mr. Repton, taking from his pocket-book a sheet of carefully-folded satin paper, "a full description of the female baby, drawn up by its mother, under the impression that twins always—I believe they generally do—closely resemble each other. 'Light hair, blue eyes, dimpled chin'—and so on. The lady—a very charming person, I assure you, and meek and gentle as a fawn—is chiefly anxious to recover her child. You and I, should our suspicions be confirmed, have other duties to perform."

This was pretty nearly all that passed, and the next day I was in Birmingham.

The search, as I was compelled to be very cautious in my inquiries, was tedious, but finally successful. Mr. and Mrs. Williams I discovered living in a pretty

house, with neat grounds attached, about two miles out of Birmingham, on the coach road to Wolverhampton. Their assumed name was Burridge, and I ascertained from the servant-girl, who fetched their dinner and supper beer, and occasionally wine and spirits, from a neighbouring tavern, that they had one child, a boy, a few months old, of whom neither father nor mother seemed very fond. By dint of much perseverance, I at length got upon pretty familiar terms with Mr. Burridge, *alias* Williams. He spent his evenings regularly in a tavern; but with all the painstaking, indefatigable ingenuity I employed, the chief knowledge I acquired, during three weeks of assiduous endeavour, was, that my friend Burridge intended, immediately after a visit which he expected shortly to receive from a rich and influential relative in London, to emigrate to America, at all events to go abroad. This was, however, very significant and precious information; and very rarely, indeed, was he, after I had obtained it, out of my sight or observation. At length perseverance obtained its reward. One morning I discerned my friend, much more sprucely attired than ordinarily, make his way to the railway station, and there question with eager looks every passenger that alighted from the first-class carriages. At last a gentleman, whom I instantly recognised, spite of his shawl and other wrappings, arrived by the express train from London. Williams instantly accosted him,

a cab was called, and away they drove. I followed in another, and saw them both alight at a hotel in New Street. I also alighted, and was mentally debating how to proceed, when Williams came out of the tavern, and proceeded in the direction of his home. I followed, overtook him, and soon contrived to ascertain that he and his wife had important business to transact in Birmingham the next morning, which would render it impossible he should meet me, as I proposed, till two or three o'clock in the afternoon at the earliest; and the next morning my esteemed friend informed me, he would leave the place, probably for ever. An hour after this interesting conversation, I, accompanied by the chief of the Birmingham police, was closeted with the landlord of the hotel in New Street, a highly-respectable person, who promised us every assistance in his power. Sir Charles Malvern had, we found, engaged a private room for the transaction of important business with some persons he expected in the morning, and our plans were soon fully matured and agreed upon.

I slept little that night, and immediately after breakfast hastened with my Birmingham colleague to the hotel. The apartment assigned for Sir Charles Malvern's use had been a bedroom, and a large wardrobe, with a high wing at each end, still remained in it. We tried if it would hold us, and with very little stooping and squeezing, found it would do very well.

The landlord soon gave us the signal to be on the alert, and in we jammed ourselves, locking the wing-doors on the inside. A minute or two afterwards Sir Charles and Mr. and Mrs. Williams entered, and, paper, pens, and ink having been brought, business commenced in right earnest. Their conversation it is needless to detail. It will suffice to observe that it was manifest Sir Charles, by a heavy bribe, had induced the accoucheur and his wife to conceal the birth of the male child, which, as I suspected, was that which Williams and his spouse were bringing up as their own. I must do the fictitious baronet the justice to say that he had from the first the utmost anxiety that no harm should befall the infant. Mr. Malvern's nervous dread lest his confederates should be questioned, had induced their hurried departure from Chester, and it now appeared that he had become aware of the suspicions entertained by Mr. Repton, and could not rest till the Williamses and the child were safe out of the country. It was now insisted, by the woman more especially, that the agreement for the large annual payment to be made by Sir Charles should be fairly written out and signed in plain "black and white," to use Mrs. Williams's expression, in order that no future misunderstandings might arise. This Mr. Malvern strongly objected to; but finding the woman would accept of no other terms, he sullenly complied, and at the same time reiterated, that if any harm should befall

the boy—to whom he intended, he said, to leave a handsome fortune—he would cease, regardless of consequences to himself, to pay the Williamses a single shilling.

A silence of several minutes followed, broken only by the scratching of the pen on the paper. The time to me seemed an age, squeezed, crooked, stifled as I was in that narrow box, and so I afterwards learned it did to my fellow-sufferer. At length Mr. Malvern said, in the same cautious whisper in which they had all hitherto spoken, “This will do, I think;” and read what he had written. Mr. and Mrs. Williams signified their approval; and as matters were now fully ripe, I gently turned the key, and very softly pushed open the door. The backs of the amiable trio were towards me, and as my boots were off, and the apartment was thickly carpeted, I approached unperceived, and to the inexpressible horror and astonishment of the parties concerned, whose heads were bent eagerly over the important document, a hand, which belonged to neither of them, was thrust silently but swiftly forward, and grasped the precious instrument. A fierce exclamation from Mr. Malvern, as he started from his seat, and a convulsive scream from Mrs. Williams as she fell back in hers, followed; and to add to the animation of the tableau, my friend in the opposite wing emerged at the same moment from his hiding-place.

Mr. Malvern comprehended at a glance the situation of affairs, and made a furious dash at the paper. I was quicker as well as stronger than he, and he failed in his object. Resistance was of course out of the question; and in less than two hours we were speeding on the rail towards London, accompanied by the child, whom we intrusted to Williams's servant-maid.

Mr. Repton was still in town, and Mrs. Ashton, Lady Redwood, and her unmarried sister, in their impatience of intelligence, had arrived several days before. I had the pleasure of accompanying Mrs. Repton with the child and his temporary nurse to Osborne's Hotel in the Adelphi; and I really at first feared for the excited mother's reason, or that she would do the infant a mischief, so tumultuous, so frenzied, was her rapturous joy at the recovery of her lost treasure. When placed in the cot beside the female infant, the resemblance of the one to the other was certainly almost perfect. I never saw before nor since so complete a likeness. This was enough for the mother; but, fortunately we had much more satisfactory evidence, legally viewed, to establish the identity of the child in a court of law, should the necessity arise for doing so.

Here, as far as I am concerned, all positive knowledge of this curious piece of family history ends. Of subsequent transactions between the parties I had no personal cognisance. I only know there was a

failure of justice, and I can pretty well guess from what motives. The parties I arrested in Birmingham were kept in strict custody for several days; but no inducement, no threats, could induce the institutors of the inquiry to appear against the detected criminals.

Mrs. and Miss Ashton, Lady Redwood and her children, left town the next day but one for Redwood Manor; and Mr. Repton, coolly told the angry superintendent that "he had no instructions to prosecute." He, too, was speedily off, and the prisoners were necessarily discharged out of custody.

I saw, about three weeks afterwards, in a morning paper, that Mr. Malvern, "whom the birth of a posthumous heir in a direct line had necessarily deprived of all chance of succession to the Redwood estates, and the baronetcy, which the newspapers had so absurdly conferred on him, was, with his amiable lady and family, about to leave England for Italy, where they intended to remain for some time." The expressed but uncompleted will of the deceased baronet, Sir Thomas Redwood, had been, it was further stated, carried into effect, and the legacy intended for Mr. Malvern paid over to him. The Williamses never, to my knowledge, attained to the dignity of a notice in the newspapers; but I believe they pursued their original intention of passing over to America.

Thus not only "Offence's gilded hand," but some of the best feelings of our nature, not unfrequently

"shove by justice," and place a concealing gloss over deeds which, in other circumstances, would have infallibly consigned the perpetrators to a prison, or perhaps the hulks. Whether, however, any enactment could effectually grapple with an abuse which springs from motives so natural and amiable, is a question which I must leave to wiser heads than mine to discuss and determine.

# Recollections of a Detective Police - Officer.

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## THE PURSUIT.

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THE reader need scarcely be told that albeit police-officers, like other men, chiefly delight to recount their *successful* exploits, they do, nevertheless, experience numerous and vexatious failures and disappointments. One especially I remember, of which the irritating recollection did not pass away for many weeks. I had been for some time in pursuit of a rather eminent rascal, though one young in years, and by marriage respectably connected, who, by an infamous abuse of the trust reposed in him by the highly-respectable firm who employed him, had contrived to possess himself of a large sum of money,

with which, or at least with the portion of it falling to his share—for we discovered that he had been for some time connected with a gang of first-rate swindlers—he hoped to escape to America. The chase was hot after him; and spite of all his doublings and turnings, and the false scents adroitly thrown out by his confederates with the view to favour his escape, I at last fairly ran him to earth at Plymouth, though in what precise spot of it he burrowed I could not for the moment ascertain. Neither was I well acquainted with his features; but in the description of his person furnished me there were certain indelible marks enumerated which, upon strict examination, could not fail to determine his identity. He purposed, I ascertained, to attempt leaving England in a barque bound for New York, which was to sail from Plymouth on the day after I arrived there. Of this I was fully satisfied, and I determined to capture him on board. Accordingly, about half an hour before the ship was to sail, and after all the passengers had embarked, two of the local officers and I got into a boat which I had some time previously engaged to be in readiness, and put off to the vessel. The wind was decidedly fair for the emigrant-ship; and so stiffly did it blow from the north-east, that four hands, I was informed, were required, not indeed to convey us swiftly out, but to pull the boat back against the wind and the strong tide which would be running outside the breakwater.

The sea dashed smartly at times over the boat, and the men pulled their sou'-wester caps well over their eyes, to shield themselves from the blinding spray. We were speedily on board; and the captain, although much annoyed at the delay, paraded his motley passengers as well as crew before us; but to my extreme surprise our bird was not amongst them! Every possible and impossible hiding-place was thoroughly but vainly searched; and we were at length compelled to a reluctant admission that the gentleman we were in quest of had not yet honoured the captain of the *Columbia* with his patronage.

We sullenly returned into the boat; and the instant we did so, the anchor, already atrip, was brought home; the ship's bows fell rapidly off; her crowded canvas dilated and swelled in the spanking breeze, and she sprang swiftly off upon her course. It was a pretty and somewhat exciting spectacle; and I and my companions continued to watch the smartly-handled vessel with much interest till a point of land hid her from our view. We then turned our faces towards Plymouth from which, I was surprised to find, we were apparently as distant as ever. "The tide, let alone the wind, is dead against us!" growled the master of the boat, who was now pulling the near oar, in reply to a remark from one of the Plymouth officers. This man had steered on going out. A quick suspicion flashed across me. "Where is the other boatman who came out with us?" I

sharply demanded. The old seaman, instead of replying, turned himself half round towards the weather-bow oar, exclaiming, "Easy, Billy—easy; let her nose lay a little closer to the wind!" This, I readily saw, was done to conceal a momentary confusion, arising from the suddenness of my question—a very slight one by-the-by, for the fellow was an old man-of-war's man, with a face hardened and bronzed by service, weather, grog, and tobacco-smoke. I repeated the question in a more peremptory tone. The veteran first deliberately squirted a mouthful of tobacco-juice over the side, and then with an expression of his cast-iron phiz, which it is impossible by words to convey a distinct idea of, so compounded was it of diabolical squint, lamb-like simplicity, and impudent cunning, replied, "That wor a passenger to Yankee Land—a goin' there, I'm purty suspicious, for the benefit of his health." I looked at the Plymouth officers and they at me. The impudent ingenuity of the trick that had been played us seemed scarcely credible. "He—he—ho—ho!" rumbled out of the tobacco-stifled throat of the old rogue. "If he wor somebody you wanted, it wor uncommon well done. Didn't you obsarve him jump into the main chains of the barkey jist as you wor leavin' on her, and cast us off a minute afterwards? He perfarred stoppin' with us whilst you wor rum-magin' the hooker—he—he—ho—ho!"

It was useless bandying words with the fellow

and though I felt desperately savage, I had sense enough to hold my tongue. "Pull smartly," said one of the Plymouth officers; "a shot will bring her to yet."

"Why, ay," rejoined the imperturbable seaman; "it mout, if you could get speech of the admiral in time; but I'm thinkin' we shall be a good while yet pullin' in against this choppin' wind and head sea."

And sure enough they were! More than another hour, by some boatman-craft unexplainable by me, for the sailors apparently rowed with all their might, were we in reaching the landing-place; and by that time all chance of compelling the return of the *Columbia* was long past.

It would be, I knew, impossible to *prove* complicity on the part of the owner of the boat with the escaped felon, and I preferred to digest the venom of my spleen in silence, rather than by a useless display of it to add to the chuckling delight of the old rascal of a boatman.

We had passed some distance along the quay when one of the local officers, addressing a youngish sailor, who, with folded arms and a short pipe in his mouth, was standing in philosophical contemplation of the sea and weather, said, "I suppose there is no chance of the emigrant ship that sailed awhile ago putting in at any other port along the coast?"

The man took the pipe from his mouth, regarded

the questioner for a few moments with an expression of contemptuous curiosity anything but flattering to its object, and bawled out, addressing himself to a weather-beaten seaman a few yards off, "I say, Tom Davis, here's a Blue Bottle as wants to know the name and bearins of the port off the Land's End which the barkey that sailed awhile agone for Ameriker, with a north-easter kicking her endways, is likely to bring up in: I'm not acquainted with it myself, or else I'd tell the gentleman."

The laugh from two or three bystanders which followed this sally greatly irritated the officer, and he would have indulged in an angry reply had not his more prudent comrade taken him by the arm and urged him away.

"Ay, ay," said the veteran addressed as Tom Davis, as we were passing him, "Jim there has always got plenty of jawing tackle aboard; but, Lord love ye, he's a poor dumb cretur at understanding the signs of the weather! He's talkin' about north-easters, and don't see that the wind's beginning to chop about like a bumboat woman with a dozen customers round her. It's my opinion, and Tom Davis ought by this time to be summut of a judge, that, instead of a north-easter, it's a precious sight more likely to be blowing a sou'-wester before two hours are past, and a sneezer too; and then the *Columby*, if she ha'nt made a good offin', which she is not likely to have done, will be back again in a brace of shakes."

"Do you think it probable," I eagerly asked, "that the *Columbia* will be obliged to put back into Plymouth?"

"I don't know about *probable*. It's not so sure as death or quarter-day, but it's upon the cards for all that."

"Will it be early in the night, think you, that she will run in, if at all?"

"Ah, there now you wants to know too much," said the old seaman turning on his heel. "All I can say is, that if you find in an hour or so's time that the wind has chopped round to the sou'west, or within a p'int or two, and that it's blowin' the buttons off your coat one after another, the *Columby*, if she's lucky, won't be far off."

The half-bantering prediction of the old seaman was confirmed by others whom we consulted, and measures for preventing our quarry from landing, and again giving us the slip, were at once discussed and resolved upon. We then separated, and I proceeded to the tavern at which I had put up to get some dinner. I had not gone far when my eye fell upon two persons whose presence there surprised as well as somewhat grieved me. One was the young wife of the criminal on board the *Columbia*. I had seen her once in London, and I knew, as before intimated, that she was of respectable parentage. There was no exultation in her countenance. She had no doubt followed or accompanied her husband

to Plymouth for the purpose of furthering his escape, and now feared that the capricious elements would render all the ingenuity and boldness that had been brought into play vain and profitless. She was a mild-looking pretty woman—very much so, I doubt not, till trouble fell upon her, and wonderfully resembled the female in the ‘Momentous Question;’ so remarkably, indeed, that when, years afterwards, I first saw that print, I felt an instantaneous conviction that I had somewhere met with the original of the portrait; and after much puzzlement of brain remembered when and where. The resemblance was doubtless purely accidental; but it was not the less extraordinary and complete. She was accompanied by a gray-haired man of grave, respectable exterior, whom I at once concluded to be her father. As I passed close by them, he appeared about to address me, and I half-paused to hear what he had to say: but his partly-formed purpose was not persisted in, and I proceeded on my way.

After dining, I returned to the quay. The wind, as foretold, was blowing directly from the southwest; and during the short space of time I had been absent, had increased to a tempest. The wild sea was dashing with terrific violence against the breakwater, discernible only in the fast-darkening night by a line of white tumultuous foam and spray, which leaped and hissed against and over it.

“A dirty night coming on,” said a subaltern officer

of the port whom I had previously spoken with; “the *Columbia* will, I think, be pretty sure to run in with the tide.”

“When do you say is the very earliest time she may be expected?”

“Well, in my opinion judging from where she was when I was on the look-out a quarter of an hour agone, not under three hours. Let me see. It’s now just upon the stroke of five: about eight o’clock, I should say, she will be here; certainly not before, perhaps much later; and if the captain is very obstinate, and prefers incurring a rather serious risk to returning, it may be of course not at all.”

I thanked him, and as remaining on the bleak quay till eight o’clock or thereabout was as useless as unpleasant, I retraced my steps towards the Royal George Tavern; calling in my way on the Plymouth officers, and arranging that one of them should relieve me at ten o’clock; it having been previously agreed that we should keep an alternate watch during the night of two hours each. I afterwards remembered that this arrangement was repeated, in a tone of voice incautiously loud, at the bar of a public-house, where they insisted on my taking a glass of porter. There were, I should say, more than a dozen persons present at the time.

The fire was blazing brightly in the parlour of the Royal George when I entered, and I had not been seated near it many minutes before I became exceed-

ingly drowsy ; and no wonder, for I had not been in bed the previous night, and the blowing of the wind in my eyes for a couple of hours had of course added greatly to their heavy weariness. Habit had long enabled me to awake at any moment I had previously determined on, so that I felt no anxiety as to oversleeping myself ; and having pulled out my watch, noticed that it was barely half-past five, wound it up, and placed it before me on the table, I settled myself comfortably in an arm-chair, and was soon sound asleep.

I awoke with a confused impression, not only that I had quite slept the time I had allotted myself, but that strangers were in the room and standing about me. I was mistaken in both particulars. There was no one in the parlour but myself, and on glancing at the watch I saw that it was but a quarter-past six. I rose from the chair, stirred the fire, took two or three turns about the room, listened for a few minutes to the howling wind and driving rain which shook and beat against the casement, sat down again, and took up a newspaper which was lying on the table.

I had read for some time when the parlour door opened, and who should walk in but the young wife and elderly gentleman whom I had seen in the street. I at once concluded that they had sought me with reference to the fugitive on board the *Columbia* ; and the venerable old man's rather elaborate apologies for intrusion over, and both of them seated on the side

of the fireplace opposite to me, I waited with grave curiosity to hear what they might have to say.

An awkward silence ensued. The young woman's eyes, swollen with weeping, were bent upon the floor, and her entire aspect and demeanour exhibited extreme sorrow and dejection. I pitied her, so sad and gentle did she look, from my very soul. The old man appeared anxious and careworn, and for some time remained abstractedly gazing at the fire without speaking. I had a mind to avoid a painful, and, I was satisfied, profitless interview, by abruptly retiring; and was just rising for the purpose when a fiercer tempest-blast than before, accompanied by the pattering of heavy rain-drops against the windowpanes caused me to hesitate at exposing myself unnecessarily to the rigour of such a night; and at the same moment the gray-haired man suddenly raised his eyes and regarded me with a fixed and grave scrutiny.

"This war of the elements," he at last said; "this wild uproar of physical nature, is but a type, Mr. Waters, and a faint one, of the convulsions, the antagonisms, the hurtful conflicts ever raging in the moral world."

I bowed dubious assent to a proposition not apparently very pertinent to the subject, which I supposed chiefly occupied his mind, and he proceeded.

"It is difficult for dim-eyed beings such as we are always to trace the guiding hand of the ever-watchful

Power which conducts the complex events of this changing, many-coloured life to wise and foreseen issues. The conflicts of faith with actual experience are hard for poor humanity to bear, and still keep unimpaired the jewel beyond price of unwavering trust in Him to whom the secrets of all hearts are known. Ah, sir! guilt, flaunting its vanities in high places—innocence in danger of fetters—are perplexing subjects to dwell upon!"

I was somewhat puzzled by this strange talk; but, hopeful that a meaning would presently appear, I again silently intimated partial concurrence in his general views.

"There is no longer much doubt, Mr. Waters, I believe," he after a few moments added in a much more business-like and sensible tone, "that the *Columbia* will be forced back again, and that the husband of this unhappy girl will consequently fall into the hands of the blind, unreasoning law. You appear surprised. My name, I should have mentioned, is Thompson; and be assured, Mr. Waters, that when the real facts of this most unfortunate affair are brought to your knowledge, no one will more bitterly regret than yourself that this tempest and sudden change of wind should have flung back the prey both you and I believe had escaped upon these fatal shores."

"From your name, I presume you to be the father of this young woman, and"—

"Yes," he interrupted; "and the father-in-law of the innocent man you have hunted down with such untiring activity and zeal. But I blame you not," he added, checking himself—"I blame you not. You have only done what you held to be your duty. But the ways of Providence are indeed inscrutable!"

A passionate burst of grief from the pale, weeping wife testified that, whatever might be the fugitive husband's offences or crimes against society, he at least retained *her* affection and esteem.

"It is very unpleasant," I observed, "to discuss such a subject in the presence of relatives of the inculpated person, especially as I as yet perceive no useful result likely to arise from it; still, since you as it were force me to speak, you must permit me to say, that it appears to me you are either grossly deceived yourself, or attempting for some purpose or other to impose upon my credulity."

"Neither, sir—neither," replied Mr. Thompson with warmth. "I certainly am not deceived myself, and I should hope that my character, which I doubt not is well known to you, will shield me from any suspicion of a desire to deceive others."

"I am quite aware, Mr. Thompson, of your personal respectability; still you may be unwittingly led astray. I very much regret to say, that the evidence against your daughter's husband is overwhelming and I fear unanswerable."

"The best, kindest of husbands!" broke in the

sobbing wife ; “the most injured, the most persecuted of men !”

“It is useless,” said I, rising and seizing my hat, “to prolong this conversation. If he be innocent, he will no doubt be acquitted ; but as it is now close upon half-past seven o’clock, I must beg to take my leave.”

“One moment, sir,” said Mr. Thompson, hastily. “To be frank with you, it was entirely for the purpose of asking your advice, as an experienced person, that we are here. You have heard of this young man’s father ?”

“Joel Masters ?—Yes. A gambler, and otherwise disreputable person, and one of the most specious rascals, I am told, under the sun.”

“You have correctly described him. You are not perhaps acquainted with his handwriting ?”

“Yes, I am ; partially so at least. I have a note in my pocket—here it is—addressed to me by the artful old scoundrel for the purpose of luring me from the right track after his son.”

“Then, Mr. Waters, please to read this letter from him, dated Liverpool, where it appears he was yesterday to embark for America.”

The letter Mr. Thompson placed in my hands startled me not a little. It was a circumstantial confession addressed by Joel Masters to his son, setting forth that he, the father, was alone guilty of the offence with which his unfortunate son was charged,

and authorizing him to make a full disclosure should he fail in making his escape from the country. This was, I thought, an exceedingly cheap kind of generosity on the part of honest Joel, now that he had secured himself by flight from the penalties of justice. The letter went on to state where a large amount of bank-notes and acceptances, which the writer had been unable to change or discount, would be found.

"This letter," said I, "is a very important one; but where is the envelope?"

Mr. Thompson searched his pocket-book: it was not there. "I must have dropped it," he exclaimed, "at my lodgings. Pray wait till I return. I am extremely anxious to convince you of this unfortunate young man's innocence. I will not be more than a few minutes absent." He then hurried out.

I looked at my watch: it wanted five-and-twenty minutes to eight. "I have but a very few minutes to spare," I observed to the still passionately-grieving wife; "and as to the letter, you had better place it in the hands of the attorney for the defence."

"Ah, sir," sobbed the wife, raising her timid eyes towards me, "you do not believe us, or you would not be so eager to seize my husband."

"Pardon me," I replied, "I have no right to doubt the truth of what you have told me; but my duty is a plain one, and must be performed."

"Tell me frankly, honestly," cried the half-frantic woman, with renewed burst of tears, "if, in your

opinion, this evidence will save my unhappy, deeply-injured husband? My father, I fear, deceives me—deceives himself with a vain hope."

I hesitated to express a very favourable opinion of the effect of a statement, obnoxious, as a few moments' reflection suggested, to so much suspicion. The wife quickly interpreted the meaning of my silence, and broke at once into a flood of hysterical lamentation. It was with the greatest difficulty I kept life in her by copious showers of water from the decanter that stood on the table. This endured some time. At last I said abruptly, for my watch admonished me that full ten minutes had been passed in this way, that I must summon the waiter and leave her.

"Go—go," said she, suddenly rallying, "since it must be so. I—I will follow."

I immediately left the house, hastened to the quay, and, on arriving there, strained my eyes seaward in search of the expected ship. A large bark, which very much resembled her, was, to my dismay, riding at anchor within the breakwater, her sails furled, and everything made snug for the night. I ran to the landing-steps, near which two or three sailors were standing.

"What vessel is that?" I asked, pointing to the one which had excited my alarm.

"*The Columbia*," replied the man.

"*The Columbia*! Why, when did she arrive?"

"Some time ago. The clock chimed a quarter past

eight as the captain and a few of the passengers came on shore."

"A quarter-past eight! Why, it wants nearly half an hour to that now!"

"Does it though? Before you are ten minutes older you'll hear the clock strike nine!"

The man's words were followed by a merry mocking laugh close to my elbow: I turned sharply round, and for the first and last time in my life I felt an almost irresistible temptation to strike a woman. There stood the meek, dove-eyed, grief-stricken wife, I had parted from but a few minutes before, gazing with brazen impudence in my face.

"Perhaps, Mr. Waters," said she, with another taunting laugh, "perhaps yours is London time; or, which is probably more likely, watches sometimes sleep for an hour or so as well as their owners." She then skipped gaily off.

"Are you a Mr. Waters?" said a custom-house official who was parading the quay.

"Yes—and what then?"

"Only that a Mr. Joel Masters desired me to say that he was very much grieved he could not return to finish the evening with you, as he and his son were unfortunately obliged to leave Plymouth immediately."

It would have been a real pleasure to have flung the speaker over the quay. By a great effort I denied myself the tempting luxury, and walked away in a

fever of rage. Neither Joel Masters nor his son could afterwards be found, spite of the unremitting efforts of myself and others, continued through several weeks. They both ultimately escaped to America; and some years afterwards I learned through an unexpected channel that the canting, specious old rascal was at length getting his deserts in the establishment of Sing-Sing. The son, the same informant assured me, had, through the persuasions and influence of his wife, who probably thought justice might not be so pleasantly eluded another time, turned over a new leaf, and was leading an honest and prosperous life at Cincinnati.

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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## LEGAL METAMORPHOSES.

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THE respectable agent of a rather eminent French house arrived one morning in great apparent distress at Scotland Yard, and informed the superintendent that he had just sustained a great, almost ruinous, loss in notes of the Bank of England and commercial bills of exchange, besides a considerable sum in gold. He had, it appeared, been absent in Paris about ten days, and on his return, but a few hours previously, discovered that his iron chest had been completely rifled during his absence. False keys must have been used,

as the empty chest was found locked, and no sign of violence could be observed. He handed in full written details of the property carried off, the numbers of the notes, and every other essential particular. The first step taken was to ascertain if any of the notes had been tendered at the bank. Not one had been presented; payment was of course stopped, and advertisements descriptive of the bills of exchange, as well as of the notes, were inserted in the evening and following morning papers. A day or two afterwards, a considerable reward was offered for such information as might lead to the apprehension of the offenders. No result followed; and spite of the active exertions of the officers employed, not the slightest clue could be obtained to the perpetrators of the robbery. The junior partner in the firm, M. Bellebon, in the meantime arrived in England, to assist in the investigation, and was naturally extremely urgent in his inquiries: but the mystery which enveloped the affair remained impenetrable. At last a letter, bearing the St. Martin-le-Grand post-mark, was received by the agent, M. Alexandre le Breton, which contained an offer to surrender the whole of the plunder, with the exception of the gold, for the sum of one thousand pounds. The property which had been abstracted was more than ten times that sum, and had been destined by the French house to meet some heavy liabilities falling due in London very shortly. Le Breton had been ordered to pay

the whole amount into Hoare's to the account of the firm, and had indeed been severely blamed for not having done so as he received the different notes and bills ; and it was on going to the chest immediately on his return from Paris, for the purpose of fulfilling the peremptory instructions he had received, that M. le Breton discovered the robbery.

The letter went on to state that should the offer be acceded to, a mystically-worded advertisement—of which a copy was enclosed—was to be inserted in the “Times,” and then a mode would be suggested for safely—in the interest of the thieves of course—carrying the agreement into effect. M. Bellebon was half-inclined to close with this proposal, in order to save the credit of the house, which would be destroyed unless its acceptances, now due in about fourteen days, could be met ; and without the stolen moneys and bills of exchange, this was, he feared, impossible. The superintendent, to whom M. Bellebon showed the letter, would not hear of compliance with such a demand, and threatened a prosecution for composition of felony if M. Bellebon persisted in doing so. The advertisement was, however, inserted, and an immediate reply directed that Le Breton, the agent, should present himself at the Old Manor-house, Green Lanes, Newington, unattended, at four o'clock on the following afternoon, bringing with him of course the stipulated sum *in gold*. It was added, that, to prevent any possible treason (*trahison*) the letter was written

in French), Le Breton would find a note for him at the tavern, informing him of the spot—a solitary one and far away from any place where an ambush could be concealed—where the business would be concluded, and to which he must proceed unaccompanied, and on foot! This proposal was certainly quite as ingenious as it was cool, and the chance of outwitting such cunning rascals seemed exceedingly doubtful. A very tolerable scheme was, however, hit upon, and M. le Breton proceeded at the appointed hour to the Old Manor-house. No letter or message had been left for him, and nobody obnoxious to the slightest suspicion could be seen near or about the tavern. On the following day another missive arrived, which stated that the writer was quite aware of the trick which the police had intended playing him, and he assured M. Bellebon that such a line of conduct was as unwise as it would be fruitless, inasmuch as if “good faith” was not observed, the securities and notes would be inexorably destroyed or otherwise disposed of, and the house of Bellebon and Company would be consequently exposed to the shame and ruin of bankruptcy.

Just at this crisis of the affair I arrived in town from my unsuccessful hunt after the fugitives who had slipped through my fingers at Plymouth. The superintendent laughed heartily, not so much at the trick by which I had been duped, as at the angry mortification I did not affect to conceal. He

presently added, "I have been wishing for your return, in order to intrust you with a tangled affair, in which success will amply compensate for such a disappointment. You know French, too, which is fortunate ; for the gentleman who has been plundered understands little or no English." He then related the foregoing particulars, with other apparently slight circumstances ; and after a long conversation with him, I retired to think the matter over, and decide upon the likeliest mode of action. After much cogitation, I determined to see M. Bellebon *alone* ; and for this purpose I despatched the waiter of a tavern adjacent to his lodgings, with a note expressive of my wish to see him instantly on pressing business. He was at home, and immediately acceded to my request. I easily introduced myself ; and after about a quarter of an hour's conference, said carelessly—for I saw he was too heedless of speech, too quick and frank, to be intrusted with the dim suspicions which certain trifling indices had suggested to me—"Is Monsieur le Breton at the office where the robbery was committed?"

"No : he is gone to Greenwich on business, and will not return till late in the evening. But if you wish to re-examine the place, I can of course enable you to do so ?

"It will, I think, be advisable ; and you will, if you please," I added, as we emerged into the street, permit me to take you by the arm, in order that the

*official character of my visit may not be suspected by any one there."*

He laughingly complied, and we arrived at the house arm in arm. We were admitted by an elderly woman ; and there was a young man—a moustached clerk—seated at a desk in an inner room writing. He eyed me for a moment, somewhat askance I thought, but I gave him no opportunity for a distinct view of my features ; and I presently handed M. Bellebon a card, on which I had contrived to write, unobserved, “send away the clerk.” This was more naturally done than I anticipated ; and in answer to M. Bellebon’s glance of inquiry, I merely said, “that as I did not wish to be known there as a police-officer, it was essential that the minute search I was about to make should be without witnesses.” He agreed ; and the woman was also sent away upon a distant errand. Every conceivable place did I ransack ; every scrap of paper that had writing on it I eagerly perused. At length the search was over, apparently without result.

“ You are quite sure, Monsieur Bellebon, as you informed the superintendent, that Monsieur le Breton has no female relations or acquaintances in this country ?”

“ Positive,” he replied. “ I have made the most explicit inquiries on the subject both of the clerk Dubarle and of the woman-servant.”

Just then the clerk returned, out of breath with

haste I noticed, and I took my leave without even now affording the young gentleman so clear a view of my face as he was evidently anxious to obtain.

"No female acquaintance!" thought I, as I re-entered the private room of the tavern I had left an hour before. "From whom came, then, these scraps of perfumed note-paper I have found in his desk I wonder?" I sat down and endeavoured to piece them out, but after considerable trouble, satisfied myself that they were parts of different notes, and so small, unfortunately, as to contain nothing which separately afforded any information except that they were all written by one hand, and that a female one.

About two hours after this I was sauntering along in the direction of Stoke-Newington, where I was desirous of making some inquiries as to another matter, and had passed the Kingsland Gate a few hundred yards, when a small discoloured printed handbill, lying in a haberdasher's shop window, arrested my attention. It ran thus:—"Two guineas reward—Lost, an Italian greyhound. The tip of its tail has been chopped off, and it answers to the name of Fidèle." Underneath, the reader was told in writing to "inquire within."

"Fidèle!" I mentally exclaimed. "Any relation to M. le Breton's fair correspondent's Fidèle, I wonder?" In a twinkling my pocket-book was out, and I reperused by the gas-light on one of the perfumed scraps of paper the following portion of a

sentence, “*ma pauvre Fidèle est per*”——. The bill, I observed, was dated nearly three weeks previously. I forthwith entered the shop, and pointing to the bill, said I knew a person who had found such a dog as was there advertised for. The woman at the counter said she was glad to hear it, as the lady, formerly a customer of theirs, was much grieved at the animal’s loss.

“What is the lady’s name?” I asked.

“I can’t rightly pronounce the name,” was the reply. “It is French, I believe; but here it is, with the address, in the day-book, written by herself.”

I eagerly read—“Madame Levasseur, Oak Cottage; about one mile on the road from Edmonton to Southgate.” The handwriting greatly resembled that on the scraps I had taken from M. le Breton’s desk; and the writer was French too! Here were indications of a trail which might lead to un hoped-for success, and I determined to follow it up vigorously. After one or two other questions, I left the shop, promising to send the dog to the lady the next day. My business at Stoke-Newington was soon accomplished. I then hastened westward to the establishment of a well-known dog-fancier, and procured the loan, at a reasonable price, of an ugly Italian hound: the requisite loss of the tip of its tail was very speedily accomplished, and so quickly healed, that the newness of the excision could not be suspected. I arrived at the lady’s residence about twelve o’clock

on the following day, so thoroughly disguised as a vagabond Cockney dog-stealer, that my own wife, when I entered the breakfast parlour just previous to starting, screamed with alarm and surprise. The mistress of Oak Cottage was at home, but indisposed, and the servant said she would take the dog to her, though, if I would take it out of the basket, she herself could tell me if it was Fidèle or not. I replied that I would only show the dog to the lady, and would not trust it out of my hands. This message was carried up stairs, and after waiting some time outside—for the woman, with natural precaution, considering my appearance, for the safety of the portable articles lying about, had closed the street-door in my face—I was readmitted, desired to wipe my shoes carefully, and walk up. Madame Levasseur, a showy-looking woman, though not over-refined in speech or manners, was seated on a sofa, in vehement expectation of embracing her dear Fidèle; but my vagabond appearance so startled her, that she screamed loudly for her husband, M. Levasseur. This gentleman, a fine, tall, whiskered, moustached person, hastened into the apartment half-shaved, and with his razor in his hand.

“Qu'est ce qu'il y a donc?” he demanded.

“Mais voyez cette horreur là,” replied the lady, meaning me, not the dog, which I was slowly emancipating from the basket-kennel. The gentleman laughed; and reassured by the presence of her

husband, Madame Levasseur's anxieties concentrated themselves upon the expected Fidèle.

"Mais, mon Dieu!" she exclaimed again, as I displayed the aged beauty I had brought for her inspection, "why, that is not Fidèle!"

"Not, marm?" I answered, with quite innocent surprise. "Vy, ere is her werry tail;" and I held up the mutilated extremity for her closer inspection. The lady was not, however, to be convinced even by that evidence; and as the gentleman soon became impatient of my persistence, and hinted very intelligibly that he had a mind to hasten my passage down stairs with the toe of his boot, I, having made the best possible use of my eyes during the short interview, scrambled up the dog and basket, and departed.

"No female relative or acquaintance hasn't he?" was my exulting thought, as I gained the road. "And yet if that is not M. le Breton's picture between those of the husband and wife, I am a booby, and a blind one." I no longer in the least doubted that I had struck a brilliant trail; and I could have shouted with exultation, so eager was I not only to retrieve my, as I fancied, somewhat tarnished reputation for activity and skill, but to extricate the plundered firm from their terrible difficulties; the more especially as young M. Bellebon, with the frankness of his age and nation, had hinted to me—and the suddenly-tremulous light of his fine

expressive eyes testified to the acuteness of his apprehensions—that his marriage with a long-loved and amiable girl depended upon his success in saving the credit of his house.

That same evening, about nine o'clock, M. Levasseur, expensively, but withal snobbishly attired, left Oak Cottage, walked to Edmonton, hailed a cab, and drove off rapidly towards town, followed by an English swell as stylishly and snobbishly dressed, wiggled, whiskered, and moustached as himself: this English swell being no other than myself, as prettily metamorphosed and made up for the part I intended playing as heart could wish.

M. Levasseur descended at the end of the Quadrant, Regent Street, and took his way to Vine Street, leading out of that celebrated thoroughfare. I followed; and observing him enter a public-house, unhesitatingly did the same. It was a house of call and general rendezvous for foreign servants out of place. Valets, couriers, cooks, of many varieties of shade, nation, and respectability, were assembled there, smoking, drinking, and playing at an insufferably noisy game, unknown, I believe, to Englishmen, and which must, I think, have been invented in sheer despair of cards, dice, or other implements of gambling. The sole instruments of play were the gamesters' fingers, of which the two persons playing suddenly and simultaneously uplifted as many, or as few, as they pleased each player

alternately calling a number; and if he named precisely how many fingers were held up by himself and opponent, he marked a point. The hubbub of cries—"cinq," "neuf," "dix," &c.—was deafening. The players—almost everybody in the large room—were too much occupied to notice our entrance; and M. Levasseur and myself seated ourselves, and called for something to drink, without, I was glad to see, exciting the slightest observation. M. Levasseur, I soon perceived, was an intimate acquaintance of many there: and somewhat to my surprise, for he spoke French very well, I found that he was a Swiss. His name was, I therefore concluded, assumed. Nothing positive rewarded my watchfulness that evening; but I felt quite sure Levasseur had come there with the expectation of meeting some one, as he did not play, and went away about half-past eleven o'clock with an obviously discontented air. The following night it was the same; but the next, who should peer into the room about half-past ten, and look cautiously round, but M. Alexandre le Breton! The instant the eyes of the friends met, Levasseur rose and went out. I hesitated to follow, lest such a movement might excite suspicion; and it was well I did not, as they both presently returned, and seated themselves close by my side. The anxious, haggard countenance of Le Breton—who had, I should have before stated, been privately pointed out to me by one of the force early on the morning I visited Oak

Cottage—struck me forcibly, especially in contrast with that of Levasseur, which wore only an expression of malignant and ferocious triumph, slightly dashed by temporary disappointment. Le Breton stayed but a short time; and the only whispered words I caught were—"He has, I fear, some suspicion."

The anxiety and impatience of M. Bellebon whilst this was going on became extreme, and he sent me note after note—the only mode of communication I would permit—expressive of his consternation at the near approach of the time when the engagements of his house would arrive at maturity, without anything having in the meantime been accomplished. I pitied him greatly, and after some thought and hesitation, resolved upon a new and bolder game. By affecting to drink a great deal, occasionally playing, and in other ways exhibiting a reckless, devil-may-care demeanour, I had striven to insinuate myself into the confidence and companionship of Levasseur, but hitherto without much effect; and although once I could see, startled by a casual hint I dropped to another person—one of ours—just sufficiently loud for him to hear—that I knew a sure and safe market for stopped Bank-of-England notes, the cautious scoundrel quickly subsided into his usual guarded reserve. He evidently doubted me, and it was imperatively necessary to remove those doubts. This was at last effectually, and, I am vain enough to think, cleverly done. One evening a rakish-looking man,

who ostentatiously and repeatedly declared himself to be Mr. Trelawny of Conduit Street, and who was evidently three parts intoxicated, seated himself directly in front of us, and with much braggart impudence boasted of his money, at the same time displaying a pocket-book, which seemed pretty full of Bank-of-England notes. There were only a few persons present in the room besides us, and they were at the other end of the room. Levasseur, I saw, noticed with considerable interest the look of greed and covetousness which I fixed on that same pocket-book. At length the stranger rose to depart. I also hurried up and slipped after him, and was quietly and slyly followed by Levasseur. After proceeding about a dozen paces I looked furtively about, but *not* behind; robbed Mr. Trelawny of his pocket-book, which he had placed in one of the tails of his coat; crossed over the street, and walked hurriedly away, still, I could hear, followed by Levasseur. I entered another public-house, strode into an empty back-room, and was just in the act of examining my prize, when in stepped Levasseur. He looked triumphant as Lucifer, as he clapped me on the shoulder, and said in a low exulting voice, "I saw that pretty trick, Williams, and can, if I like, transport you!"

My consternation was naturally extreme, and Levasseur laughed immensely at the terror he excited. "Soyez tranquille," he said at last, at the same time ringing the bell: "I shall not hurt you."

He ordered some wine, and after the waiter had fulfilled the order and left the room, said, "Those notes of Mr. Trelawny's will of course be stopped in the morning, but I think I once heard you say you knew of a market for such articles?"

I hesitated, coyly unwilling to further commit myself. "Come, come," resumed Levasseur, in a still low but menacing tone, "no nonsense. I have you now; you are, in fact, entirely in my power: but be candid, and you are safe. Who is your friend?"

"He is not in town now," I stammered.

"Stuff—humbug! I have myself some notes to change. There, now we understand each other. What does he give, and how does he dispose of them?"

"He gives about a third generally, and gets rid of them abroad. They reach the bank through *bond fide* and innocent holders, and in that case the Bank is of course bound to pay."

"Is that the law also with respect to bills of exchange?"

"Yes, to be sure it is."

"And is *amount* of any consequence to your friend?"

"None, I believe, whatever."

"Well, then, you must introduce me to him."

"No, that I can't," I hurriedly answered. "He won't deal with strangers."

"You *must*, I tell you, or I will call an officer." Terrified by this threat, I muttered that his name was Levi Samuel.

"And where does Levi Samuel live?"

"That," I replied, "I *cannot* tell; but I know how to communicate with him."

Finally, it was settled by Levasseur that I should dine at Oak Cottage the next day but one, and that I should arrange with Samuel to meet us there immediately afterwards. The notes and bills he had to dispose of, I was to inform Samuel, amounted to nearly twelve thousand pounds, and I was promised 500*l.* for effecting the bargain.

"Five hundred pounds, remember, Williams," said Levasseur as we parted; "or, if you deceive me, transportation! You can prove nothing regarding *me* whereas I could settle *you* off hand."

The superintendent and I had a long and rather anxious conference the next day. We agreed that, situate as Oak Cottage was, in an open space away from any other building, it would not be advisable that any officer except myself and the pretended Samuel should approach the place. We also agreed as to the probability of such clever rogues having so placed the notes and bills that they could be consumed or otherwise destroyed on the slightest alarm, and that the open arrest of Levasseur, and a search of Oak Cottage, would in all likelihood prove fruitless. "There will be only two of them," I said, in reply to a remark of the superintendent as to the somewhat dangerous game I was risking with powerful and desperate men, "even should Le Breton be there;

and surely Jackson and I, aided by the surprise and our pistols, will be too many for them.” Little more was said, the superintendent wished us luck, and I sought out and instructed Jackson.

I will confess that, on setting out the next day to keep my appointment, I felt considerable anxiety. Levasseur *might* have discovered my vocation, and set this trap for my destruction. Yet that was hardly possible. At all events, whatever the danger, it was necessary to face it; and having cleaned and loaded my pistols with unusual care, and bade my wife a more than usually earnest farewell, which, by the way, rather startled her, I set off, determined, as we used to say in Yorkshire, “to win the horse or lose the saddle.”

I arrived in good time at Oak Cottage, and found my host in the highest possible spirits. Dinner was ready, he said, but it would be necessary to wait a few minutes for the two friends he expected.

“*Two* friends!” I exclaimed; really startled. “You told me last evening there was to be only one, a Monsieur le Breton.”

“True,” rejoined Levasseur carelessly; “but I had forgotten that another party as much interested as ourselves would like to be present, and invite himself, if I did not. But there will be enough for us all, never fear,” he added, with a coarse laugh, “especially as Madame Levasseur does not dine with us.”

At this moment a loud knock was heard. "Here they are," exclaimed Levasseur, and hastened out to meet them. I peeped through the blind, and to my great alarm saw that Le Breton was accompanied by the clerk Dubarle! My first impulse was to seize my pistols and rush out of the house; but calmer thoughts soon succeeded, and the probability that a plan had been laid to entrap me recurred forcibly. Still, should the clerk recognize me? The situation was undoubtedly a critical one; but I was in for it, and must therefore brave the matter out in the best way I could.

Presently a conversation, carried on in a loud, menacing tone in the next room between Levasseur and the new-comers, arrested my attention, and I softly approached the door to listen. Le Breton, I soon found, was but half a villain, and was extremely anxious that the property should not be disposed of till at least another effort had been made at negotiation. The others, now that a market for the notes and securities had been obtained, were determined to avail themselves of it, and immediately leave the country. The almost agonized entreaties of Le Breton that they would not utterly ruin the house he had betrayed, were treated with scornful contempt, and he was at length silenced by their brutal menaces. Le Breton, I further learned, was a cousin of Madame Levasseur, whose husband had first pillaged him at play, and then suggested the crime which had been

ommited as the sole means of concealing the defalcations of which he, Levasseur, had been the occasion and promoter.

After a brief delay, all three entered the dining-room, and a slight but significant start which the clerk Dubarle gave, as Levasseur, with mock ceremony, introduced me, made my heart, as folk say, leap into my mouth. His half-formed suspicions seemed, however, to be dissipated for the moment by the humorous account Levasseur gave him of the robbery of Mr. Trelawny, and we sat down to a very handsome dinner.

A more uncomfortable one, albeit, I never assisted at. The furtive looks of Dubarle, who had been only partially reassured, grew more and more inquisitive and earnest. Fortunately Levasseur was in rollicking spirits and humour, and did not heed the unquiet glances of the young man; and as for Le Breton, he took little notice of anybody. At last this terrible dinner was over, and the wine was pushed briskly round. I drank much more freely than usual, partly with a view to calm my nerves, and partly to avoid remark. It was nearly the time for the Jew's appearance, when Dubarle, after a scrutinising and somewhat imperious look at my face, said abruptly, "I think, Monsieur Williams, I have seen you somewhere before?"

"Very likely," I replied, with as much indifference as I could assume. "Many persons have seen me before—some of them once or twice too often."

“True!” exclaimed Levasseur with a shout.  
“Trelawney, for instance!”

“I should like to see monsieur with his wig off!” said the clerk with increasing insolence.

“Nonsense, Dubarle; you are a fool,” exclaimed Levasseur; “and I will not have my good friend Williams insulted.”

Dubarle did not persist, but it was plain enough that some dim remembrance of my features continued to haunt and perplex him.

At length, and the relief was unspeakable, a knock at the outer door announced Jackson—Levi Samuel I mean. We all jumped up, and ran to the window. It was the Jew sure enough, and admirably he had dressed and now looked the part. Levasseur went out, and in a minute or two returned introducing him. Jackson could not suppress a start as he caught sight of the tall moustached addition to the expected company; and although he turned it off very well, it drove the Jewish dialect in which he had been practising completely out of his thoughts and speech, as he said, “You have more company than my friend Williams led me to expect?”

“A friend—one friend extra, Mr. Samuel,” said Levasseur; “that is all. Come, sit down, and let me help you to a glass of wine. You are an English Jew I perceive?”

“Yes.”

A silence of a minute or two succeeded, and then

Levasseur said, " You are of course prepared for business ? "

" Yes—that is, if you are reasonable."

" Reasonable ! the most reasonable men in the world," rejoined Levasseur with a loud laugh. " But pray where is the gold you mean to pay us with ? "

" If we agree, I will fetch it in half an hour. I do not carry bags of sovereigns about with me into *all* companies," replied Jackson, with much readiness.

" Well, that's right enough : and now how much discount do you charge ? "

" I will tell you when I see the securities."

Levasseur rose without another word, and left the apartment. He was gone about ten minutes, and on his return, deliberately counted out the stolen Bank-of-England notes and bills of exchange. Jackson got up from his chair, peered close to them, and began noting down the amounts in his pocket-book. I also rose, and pretended to be looking at a picture by the fireplace. The moment was a nervous one, as the signal had been agreed upon, and could not now be changed or deferred. The clerk Dubarle also hastily rose, and eyed Jackson with flaming but indecisive looks. The examination of the securities was at length terminated, and Jackson began counting the Bank-of-England notes aloud—" One—two—three—four—**FIVE!**" As the signal word passed his lips, he threw himself upon Le Breton, who sat next to him ; and at the same moment I passed one of my feet

between Dubarle's, and with a dextrous twist hurled him violently on the floor; another instant and my grasp was on the throat of Levasseur, and my pistol at his ear. "Hurra!" we both shouted with eager excitement; and before either of the villains could recover from his surprise, or indeed perfectly comprehend what had happened, Levasseur and Le Breton were hand-cuffed, and resistance was out of the question. Young Dubarle was next easily secured.

Levasseur, the instant he recovered the use of his faculties, which the completeness and suddenness of the surprise and attack had paralysed, yelled like a madman with rage and anger, and but for us, would, I verily believe, have dashed his brains out against the walls of the room. The other two were calmer, and having at last thoroughly pinioned and secured them, and carefully gathered up the recovered plunder, we left Oak Cottage in triumph, letting ourselves out, for the woman-servant had gone off, doubtless to acquaint her mistress with the disastrous turn affairs had taken. No inquiry was made after either of them.

An hour afterwards the prisoners were securely locked up, and I hurried to acquaint M. Bellebon with the fortunate issue of our enterprise. His exultation, it will be readily believed, was unbounded; and I left him busy with letters to the firm, and doubtless one to "*cette chère et aimable Louise*," announcing the joyful news.

The prisoners, after a brief trial, which many readers of this narrative may perhaps remember, were convicted of felonious conspiracy, and were all sentenced to ten years' transportation. Le Breton's sentence, the judge told him, would have been for life, but for the contrition he had exhibited shortly before his apprehension.

As Levasseur passed me on leaving the dock, he exclaimed in French, and in a desperately savage tone, "I will repay you for this when I return, and that infernal Trelawny too." I am too much accustomed to threats of this kind to be in any way moved by them, and I therefore contented myself by smiling, and a civil "Au revoir, allons!"

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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## THE REVENGE.

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LEVASSEUR and his confederates sailed for the penal settlements in the ill-fated convict-ship, the *Amphytrion*, the total wreck of which on the coast of France, and consequent drowning of the crew and prisoners, excited so painful a sensation in England. A feeling of regret for the untimely fate of Le Breton, whom I regarded rather as a weak dupe than a purposed rascal, passed over my mind as I read the announcement in the newspapers; but newer events had almost jostled

the incidents connected with his name from my remembrance, when a terrible adventure vividly recalled them, and taught me how fierce and untameable are the instincts of hate and revenge in a certain class of minds.

A robbery of plate had been committed in Portman Square with an ingenuity and boldness which left no doubt that it had been effected by clever and practised hands. The detective officers first employed having failed to discover the offenders, the threads of the imperfect and broken clue were placed in my hands, to see if my somewhat renowned dexterity, or luck, as many of my brother-officers preferred calling it, would enable me to piece them out to a satisfactory conclusion. By the description obtained of a man who had been seen lurking about the house a few days previous to the burglary, it had been concluded by my predecessors in the investigation that one Martin, a fellow with half-a-dozen *aliases*, and a well-known traveller on the road to the hulks, was concerned in the affair; and by their advice a reward of fifty pounds had been offered for his apprehension and conviction. I prosecuted the inquiry with my usual energy and watchfulness, without alighting upon any new fact or intimation of importance. I could not discover that a single article of the missing property had been either pawned or offered for sale, and little doubt remained that the crucible had fatally diminished the chances of detection. The only hope was, that an

increased reward might induce one of the gang to betray his confederates : and as the property was of large value, this was done, and one hundred guineas was promised for the required information. I had been to the printer's to order the placards announcing the increased recompense ; and after indulging in a long gossip with the foreman of the establishment, whom I knew well, was passing at about a quarter-past ten o'clock through Ryder's Court, Newport Market, where a tall man met and passed me swiftly, holding a handkerchief to his face. There was nothing remarkable in that, as the weather was bitterly cold and sleety ; and I walked unheedingly on. I was just in the act of passing out of the court towards Leicester Square, when swift steps sounded suddenly behind me. I instinctively turned ; and as I did so, received a violent blow on the left shoulder—intended, I doubted not, for the nape of my neck—from the tall individual who had passed me a minute previously. As he still held the handkerchief to his face, I did not catch even a momentary glance at his features, and he ran off with surprising speed. The blow, sudden, jarring, and inflicted with a sharp instrument—by a strong knife or a dagger—caused a sensation of faintness ; and before I recovered from it all chance of successful pursuit was at an end. The wound, which was not at all serious, I had dressed at a chemist's shop in the Haymarket; and as proclaiming the attack would do nothing towards detecting the perpetrator

of it, I said little about it to any one, and managed to conceal it entirely from my wife, to whom it would have suggested a thousand painful apprehensions whenever I happened to be unexpectedly detained from home. The brief glimpse I had of the balked assassin afforded no reasonable indication of his identity. To be sure he ran at an amazing and unusual pace, but this was a qualification possessed by so many of the light-legged as well as light-fingered gentry of my professional acquaintance, that it could not justify even a random suspicion; and I determined to forget the unpleasant incident as soon as possible.

The third evening after this occurrence I was again passing along Leicester Square at a somewhat late hour, but this time with all my eyes about me. Snow, which the wind blew sharply in one's face, was falling fast, and the cold was intense. Except myself, and a tallish, snow-wreathed figure—a woman apparently—not a living being was to be seen. This figure, which was standing still at the further side of the square, appeared to be awaiting me, and as I drew near it, threw back the hood of a cloak, and to my great surprise disclosed the features of a Madame Jaubert. This lady, some years before, had carried on, not very far from the spot where she now stood, a respectable millinery business. She was a widow with one child, a daughter of about seven years of age. Marie-Louise, as she was named, was one unfortunate day sent to

Coventry Street on an errand with some money in her hand, and never returned. The inquiries set on foot proved utterly without effect: not the slightest intelligence of the fate of the child was obtained—and the grief and distraction of the bereaved mother resulted in temporary insanity. She was confined in a lunatic asylum for seven or eight months, and when pronounced convalescent, found herself homeless, and almost penniless, in the world. This sad story I had heard from one of the keepers of the asylum during her sojourn there. It was a subject she herself never, I was aware, touched upon; and she had no reason to suspect that I was in the slightest degree informed of this melancholy passage in her life. She, why, I know not, changed her name from that of Duquesne to the one she now bore—Jaubert; and for the last two or three years had supported a precarious existence by plausible begging-letters addressed to persons of credulous benevolence; for which offence she had frequently visited the police courts at the instance of the secretary of the Mendicity Society, and it was there I had consequently made her acquaintance.

“Madame Jaubert!” I exclaimed, with unfeigned surprise, “why, what on earth can you be waiting here for on such a night as this?”

“To see you!” was her curt reply.

“To see me! Depend upon it, then, you are knocking at the wrong door for not the first time

in your life. The very little faith I ever had in professional widows, with twelve small children, all down in the measles, has long since vanished, and"—

"Nay," she interrupted—she spoke English, by the way, like a native—"I'm not such a fool as to be trying the whimpering dodge upon you. It is a matter of business. You want to find Jem Martin?"

"Ay, truly; but what can *you* know of him? Surely you are not *yet* fallen so low as to be the associate or accomplice of burglars?"

"Neither yet, nor likely to be so," replied the woman; "still I could tell you where to place your hand on James Martin, if I were but sure of the reward."

"There can be no doubt about that," I answered.

"Then follow me, and before ten minutes are past you will have secured your man."

I did so—cautiously, suspiciously; for my adventure three evenings before had rendered me unusually circumspect and watchful. She led the way to the most crowded quarter of St. Giles's, and when she had reached the entrance of a dark, blind alley, called Hine's Court, turned into it, and beckoned me to follow.

"Nay, nay, Madame Jaubert," I exclaimed, "that won't do. You mean fairly, I dare say; but I don't enter that respectable alley alone at this time of night."

She stopped, silent and embarrassed. Presently she said, with a sneer, " You are afraid, I suppose ? "

" Yes, I am."

" What is to be done, then ? " she added, after a few moments' consideration. " He is alone, I assure you."

" That is possible ; still I do not enter that *cul de-sac* to-night unaccompanied save by you."

" You suspect me of some evil design, Mr. Waters ? " said the woman, with an accent of reproach. " I thought you might, and yet nothing can be further from the truth. My sole object is to obtain the reward, and escape from this life of misery and degradation to my own country, and if possible begin the world respectably again. Why should you doubt me ? "

" How came you acquainted with this robber's haunts ? "

" The explanation is easy, but this is not the time for it. Stay ; can't you get assistance ? "

" Easily—in less than ten minutes ; and if you are here when I return, and your information proves correct, I will ask pardon for my suspicions."

" Be it so," she said joyfully ; " and be quick, for this weather is terrible."

Ten minutes had not passed when I returned with half-a-dozen officers, and found Madame Jaubert still at her post. We followed her up the court, caught Martin sure enough asleep upon a wretched pallet of

straw in one of the alley hovels, and walked him off, terribly scared and surprised, to the nearest station-house, where he passed the remainder of the night.

The next day Martin proved an *alibi* of the distinctest, most undeniable kind. He had been an inmate of Clerkenwell prison for the last three months, with the exception of just six days previous to our capture of him; and he was of course at once discharged. The reward was payable only upon conviction of the offender, and the disappointment of poor Madame Jaubert was extreme. She wept bitterly at the thought of being compelled to continue her present disreputable mode of life, when a thousand francs—a sum she believed Martin's capture would have assured her—besides sufficient for her travelling expenses and decent outfit, would, she said, purchase a partnership in a small but respectable millinery shop in Paris. "Well," I remarked to her, "there is no reason for despair. You have not only proved your sincerity and good faith, but that you possess a knowledge—how acquired you best know—of the haunts and hiding-places of burglars. The reward, as you may have seen by the new placards, has been doubled; and I have a strong opinion, from something that has reached me this morning, that if you could light upon one Armstrong, *alias* Rowden, it would be as certainly yours as if already in your pocket."

"Armstrong—Rowden!" repeated the woman with

anxious simplicity ; “ I never heard either of these names. What sort of a person is he ? ”

I described him minutely ; but Madame Jaubert appeared to entertain little or no hope of discovering his whereabouts ; and ultimately went away in a very disconsolate mood, after, however, arranging to meet me the next evening.

I met her as agreed. She could obtain, she said, no intelligence of any reliable worth ; and she pressed me for further particulars. Was Armstrong a drinking, a gaining, or a playgoing man ? I told her all I knew of his habits, and a gleam of hope glanced across her face as one or two indications were mentioned. I was to see her again on the morrow. It came ; she was as far off as ever ; and I advised her to waste no further time in the pursuit, but to at once endeavour to regain a position of respectability by the exercise of industry in the trade or business in which she was reputedly well-skilled. Madame Jaubert laughed scornfully ; and a gleam, it seemed to me, of her never entirely subdued insanity shot out from her deep-set, flashing eyes. It was finally settled that I should meet her once more at the same place at about eight o’clock the next evening.

I arrived somewhat late at the appointed rendezvous, and found Madame Jaubert in a state of manifest excitement and impatience. She had, she was pretty sure, discovered Armstrong, and knew that he was at that moment in a house in Greek Street, Soho.

“Greek Street, Soho! Is he alone?”

“Yes; with the exception of a woman who is minding the premises, and of whom he is an acquaintance under another name. You will be able to secure him without the least risk or difficulty; but not an instant must be lost.”

Madame Jaubert perceived my half-hesitation. “Surely,” she exclaimed, “you are not afraid of one man! It’s useless affecting to suspect *me* after what has occurred.”

“True,” I replied. “Lead on.”

The house at which we stopped in Greek Street appeared to be an empty one, from the printed bills in the windows announcing it to be let or sold. Madame Jaubert knocked in a peculiar manner at the door, which was presently opened by a woman. “Is Mr. Brown still within?” Madame Jaubert asked in a low voice.

“Yes: what do you want with him?”

“I have brought a gentleman who will most likely be a purchaser of some of the goods he has to dispose of.”

“Walk in, then, if you please,” was the answer. We did so; and found ourselves, as the door closed, in pitch darkness. “This way,” said the woman; “you shall have a light in half a minute.”

“Let me guide you,” said Madame Jaubert, as I groped onwards by the wall, and at the same time seizing my right hand. Instantly as she did so, I

heard a rustle just behind me—two quick and violent blows descended on the back of my head, there was a flash before my eyes, a suppressed shout of exultation rang in my ears, and I fell insensible to the ground.

It was some time, on partially recovering my senses, before I could realise either what had occurred, or the situation in which I found myself. Gradually, however, the incidents attending the artfully-prepared treachery of Madame Jaubert grew into distinctness, and I pretty well comprehended my present position. I was lying at the bottom of a cart, blindfold, gagged, handcuffed, and covered over by what, from their smell, seemed to be empty corn sacks. The vehicle was moving at a pretty rapid rate, and judging from the roar and tumult without, through one of the busiest thoroughfares of London. It was Saturday evening ; and I thought, from the character of the noises, and the tone of a clock just chiming ten, that we were in Tottenham Court Road. I endeavoured to rise, but found, as I might have expected, that it was impossible to do so, my captors having secured me to the floor of the cart by strong cords. There was nothing for it, therefore, but patience and resignation—words easily pronounced, but difficult, under such circumstances to realise in practice. My thoughts, doubtless in consequence of the blows I had received, soon became hurried and incoherent. A tumultuous throng of images swept confusedly past, of which the most constant and frequent were the faces of my wife

and youngest child, whom I had kissed in his sleep just previous to my leaving home. Madame Jaubert and James Martin were also there; and ever and anon the menacing countenance of Levasseur stooped over me with a hideous expression, and I felt as if clutched in the fiery grasp of a demon. I have no doubt that the voice which sounded in my ear at the moment I was felled to the ground must have suggested the idea of the Swiss—faintly and imperfectly as I caught it. This tumult of brain only gradually subsided as the discordant uproar of the streets—which no doubt added to the excitement I was suffering under by suggesting the exasperating nearness of abundant help which could not be appealed to—died gradually away into a silence only broken by the rumble of the cart-wheels, and the subdued talk of the driver and his companions, of whom there appeared to be two or three. At length the cart stopped; I heard a door unlocked and thrown open, and a few moments afterwards I was dragged from under the corn-sacks, carried up three flights of stairs, and dropped brutally upon the floor, till a light could be procured. Directly one was brought, I was raised to my feet, placed upright against a wooden partition, and staples having been driven into the panelling, securely fastened in that position, with cords passed through them, and round my armpits. This effected—an authoritative voice—the now distinct recognition of which thrilled me

with dismay—ordered that I should be unblinded. It was done; and when my eyes became somewhat accustomed to the suddenly-dazzling light and glare, I saw Levasseur and the clerk Dubarle standing directly in front of me, their faces kindled into flame by fiendish triumph and delight. The report that they had been drowned was then a mistake, and they had incurred the peril of returning to this country for the purpose of avenging themselves upon me; and how could it be doubted that an opportunity, achieved at such fearful risk, would be effectually, remorselessly used? A pang of mortal terror shot through me, and then I strove to awaken in my heart a stern endurance and resolute contempt of death, with, I may now confess, very indifferent success. The woman Jaubert was, I also saw, present; and a man, whom I afterwards ascertained to be Martin, was standing near the doorway, with his back towards me. These two, at a brief intimation from Levasseur, went down stairs; and then the fierce exultation of the two escaped convicts—of Levasseur especially—broke forth with wolfish rage and ferocity. “Ha—ha—ha!” shouted the Swiss, at the same time striking me over the face with his open hand, “you find, then, that others can plot as well as you can—dog, traitor, scoundrel that you are! ‘Au revoir—allons!’ was it, eh? Well, here we are, and I wish you joy of the meeting. Ha—ha! How dismal the rascal looks, Dubarle!”—(Again the

coward struck me)—“He is hardly grateful to me, it seems, for having kept my word. I always do, my fine fellow,” he added, with a savage chuckle; “and never neglect to pay my debts of honour—yours, especially,” he continued, drawing a pistol from his pocket, “shall be prompt payment, and with interest, too, scélérat!” He held the muzzle of the pistol to within a yard of my forehead, and placed his finger on the trigger. I instinctively closed my eyes, and tasted in that fearful moment the full bitterness of death; but my hour was not yet come. Instead of the flash and report which I expected would herald me into eternity, a taunting laugh from Levasseur at the terror he excited rang through the room.

“Come, come,” said Dubarle, over whose face a gleam of commiseration, almost of repentance, had once or twice passed; “you will alarm that fellow down stairs with your noise. We must, you know, wait till he is gone, and he appears to be in no hurry. In the meantime let us have a game of piquet for the first shot at the traitor’s carcase.”

“Excellent—capital!” shouted Levasseur, with savage glee. “A game of piquet; the stake, your life, Waters! A glorious game! and mind you see fair play. In the meantime, here’s your health, and better luck next time, if you should chance to live to see it.” He swallowed a draught of wine which Dubarle, after helping himself, had poured out for him; and then approaching me, with the silver cup

he had drained in his hand, said, “Look at the crest! Do you recognise it—fool, idiot that you are?”

I did so readily enough: it was a portion of the plunder carried off from Portman Square.

“Come,” again interposed Dubarle, “let us have our game.”

The play began, and—— But I will dwell no longer upon this terrible passage in my police experience. Frequently even now the incidents of that night revisit me in dreams, and I awake with a start and cry of terror. In addition to the mental torture I endured, I was suffering under an agonizing thirst, caused by the fever of my blood, and the pressure of the absorbing gag, which still remained in my mouth. It was wonderful I did not lose my senses. At last the game was over; the Swiss won, and sprang to his feet with the roar of a wild beast.

At this moment Madame Jaubert entered the apartment somewhat hastily. “This man below,” she said, “is getting insolent. He has taken it into his tipsy head that you mean to kill your prisoner, and he won’t, he says, be involved in a murder, which would be sure to be found out. I told him he was talking absurdly; but he is still not satisfied, so you had better go down and speak to him yourself.”

I afterwards found, it may be as well to mention here, that Madame Jaubert and Martin had been induced to assist in entrapping me, in order that I might be out of the way when a friend of Levasseur

who had been committed to Newgate on a serious charge, came to be tried, I being the chief witness against him; and they were both assured that I had nothing more serious to apprehend than a few days' detention. In addition to a considerable money-present, Levasseur had, moreover, promised Madame Jaubert to pay her expenses to Paris, and assist in placing her in business there.

Levasseur muttered a savage imprecation on hearing the woman's message, and then said, "Come with me, Dubarle; if we cannot convince the fellow, we can at least silence him! Marie Duquesne, you will remain here."

As soon as they were gone, the woman eyed me with a compassionate expression, and approaching close to me, said in a low voice, "Do not be alarmed at their tricks and menaces. After Thursday you will be sure to be released."

I shook my head, and as distinctly as I could made a gesture with my fettered arms towards the table on which the wine was standing. She understood me. "If," said she, "you will promise not to call out, I will relieve you of the gag."

I eagerly nodded compliance. The gag was removed, and she held a cup of wine to my fevered lips. It was a draught from the waters of paradise, and hope, energy, life, were renewed within me as I drank.

"You are deceived," I said, in a guarded voice,

the instant my burning thirst was satisfied. “They intend to murder me, and you will be involved as an accomplice.”

“Nonsense,” she replied. “They have been frightening you, that’s all.”

“I again repeat you are deceived. Release me from these fetters and cords, give me but a chance of at least selling my life as dearly as I can, and the money you told me you stood in need of shall be yours.”

“Hark!” she exclaimed. “They are coming!”

“Bring down a couple of bottles of wine,” said Levasseur from the bottom of the stairs. Madamo Jaubert obeyed the order, and in a few minutes returned.

I renewed my supplications to be released, and was of course extremely liberal of promises.

“It is vain talking,” said the woman. “I do not believe they will harm you; but even if it were as you say, it is too late now to retrace my steps. You cannot escape. That fool below is already three-parts intoxicated; they are both armed, and would hesitate at nothing if they but suspected treachery.”

It was vain to urge her. She grew sullen and menacing; and was insisting that the gag should be replaced in my mouth, when a thought struck me.

“Levasseur called you Marie Duquesne just now; but surely your name is Jaubert—is it not?”

"Do not trouble yourself about my name," she replied: "that is my affair, not yours."

"Because if you *are* the Marie Duquesne who once kept a shop in Cranbourne Alley, and lost a child called Marie-Louise, I could tell you something."

A wild light broke from her dark eyes, and a suppressed scream from her lips. "I am that Marie Duquesne!" she said in a voice tremulous with emotion.

"Then I have to inform you that the child so long supposed to be lost I discovered nearly three weeks ago."

The woman fairly leapt towards me, clasped me fiercely by the arms, and peering in my face with eyes on fire with insane excitement, hissed out, "You lie—you lie, you dog! You are striving to deceive me! She is in heaven: the angels told me so long since."

I do not know, by the way, whether the falsehood I was endeavouring to palm off upon the woman was strictly justifiable or not; but I am fain to believe that there are few moralists that would not, under the circumstances, have acted pretty much as I did.

"If your child was lost when going on an errand to Coventry Street, and her name is Marie-Louise Duquesne, I tell you she is found. How should I otherwise have become acquainted with these particulars?"

"True—true," she muttered: "how else should he know? Where is she?" added the woman in tones of agonized entreaty, as she sank down and clasped my knees. "Tell me—tell me, as you hope for life or mercy, where may I find my child?"

"Release me, give me a chance of escape, and to-morrow your child shall be in your arms. Refuse, and the secret dies with me."

She sprang quickly to her feet, unclasped the handcuffs, snatched a knife from the table, and cut the cords which bound me with eager haste. "Another draught of wine," she said, still in the same hurried, almost insane manner. "You have work to do! Now, whilst I secure the door, do you rub and chafe your stiffened joints." The door was soon fastened, and then she assisted in restoring the circulation to my partially-benumbed limbs. This was at last accomplished, and Marie Duquesne drew me towards a window, which she softly opened. "It is useless," she whispered, "to attempt a struggle with the men below. You must descend by this," and she placed her hand upon a lead water-pipe, which reached from the roof to within a few feet of the ground.

"And you," I said; "how are you to escape?"

"I will tell you. Do you hasten on towards Hampstead, from which we are distant in a northerly direction about a mile. There is a house at about half the distance. Procure help, and return as quickly as possible. The door-fastenings will resist

some time, even should your flight be discovered. You will not fail me?"

"Be assured I will not." The descent was a difficult and somewhat perilous one, but it was safely accomplished, and I set off at the top of my speed towards Hampstead.

I had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile, when the distant sound of a horse's feet, coming at a slow trot towards me, caught my ear. I paused, to make sure I was not deceived, and as I did so, a wild scream from the direction I had left, followed by another and another, broke upon the stillness of the night. The scoundrels had no doubt discovered my escape, and were about to wreak their vengeance upon the unfortunate creature in their power. The trot of the horse which I had heard was, simultaneously with the breaking out of those wild outcries, increased to a rapid gallop. "Hallo!" exclaimed the horseman as he came swiftly up. "Do you know where these screams come from?" It was the horse-patrol who thus providentially came up! I briefly stated that the life of a woman was at the mercy of two escaped convicts. "Then for God's sake jump up behind me!" exclaimed the patrol. "We shall be there in a couple of minutes." I did so: the horse—a powerful animal, and not entirely unused to carry double—started off, as if it comprehended the necessity for speed, and in a very brief space of time we were at the door of the house from which I had so lately

escaped. Marie Duquesne, with her body half out of the window, was still wildly screaming as we rushed into the room below. There was no one there, and we swiftly ascended the stairs, at the top of which we could hear Levasseur and Dubarle thundering at the door, which they had unexpectedly found fastened, and hurling a storm of imprecations at the woman within, the noise of which enabled us to approach them pretty nearly before we were heard or perceived. Martin saw us first, and his sudden exclamation alarmed the others. Dubarle and Martin made a desperate rush to pass us, by which I was momently thrown on one side against the wall; and very fortunately, as the bullet levelled at me from a pistol Levasseur held in his hand would probably have finished me. Martin escaped, which I was not very sorry for; but the patrol pinned Dubarle safely, and I gripped Levasseur with a strength and ferocity against which he was powerless as an infant. Our victory was complete; and two hours afterwards, the recaptured convicts were safely lodged in a station-house.

I caused Madaine Duquesne to be as gently undeceived the next morning as possible with respect to her child; but the reaction and disappointment proved too much for her wavering intellect. She relapsed into positive insanity, and was placed in Bedlam, where she remained two years. At the end of that period she was pronounced convalescent. A

sufficient sum of money was raised by myself and others, not only to send her to Paris, but to enable her to set up as a milliner in a small but respectable way. As lately as last May, when I saw her there, she was in health both of mind and body, and doing comfortably.

With the concurrence of the police authorities, very little was said publicly respecting my entrapment. It might perhaps have excited a monomania amongst liberated convicts—coloured and exaggerated as every incident would have been for the amusement of the public—to attempt similar exploits. I was also anxious to conceal the peril I had encountered from my wife; and it was not till I had left the police force that she was informed of it. Levasseur and Dubarle were convicted of returning from transportation before the term for which they had been sentenced had expired, and were this time sent across the seas for life. The reporters of the morning papers, or rather the reporter for the "Times," "Herald," "Chronicle," "Post," and "Advertiser," gave precisely the same account, even to the misspelling of Levasseur's name, dismissing the brief trial in the following paragraph, under the head of "Old Bailey Sessions":—"Alphonse Dubarle (24), and Sebastian Levasson (49), were identified as unlawfully-returned convicts, and sentenced to transportation for life. The prisoners, it was understood, were connected with the late plate-robbery in Portman

Square ; but as a conviction could not have increased their punishment, the indictment was not pressed."

Levasseur, I had almost forgotten to state, admitted that it was he who wounded me in Ryder's Court, Leicester Square.

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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MARY KINGSFORD

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TOWARDS the close of the year 1836, I was hurriedly despatched to Liverpool for the purpose of securing the person of one Charles James Marshall, a collecting clerk, who, it was suddenly discovered, had absconded with a considerable sum of money belonging to his employers. I was too late—Charles James Marshall having sailed in one of the American liners the day before my arrival in the northern commercial capital. This fact well ascertained, I immediately set out on my return to London. Winter had come

upon us unusually early; the weather was bitterly cold; and a piercing wind caused the snow, which had been falling heavily for several hours, to gyrate in fierce, blinding eddies, and heaped it up here and there into large and dangerous drifts. The obstruction offered by the rapidly-congealing snow greatly delayed our progress between Liverpool and Birmingham; and at a few miles only distant from the latter city, the leading engine ran off the line. Fortunately, the rate at which we were travelling was a very slow one, and no accident of moment occurred. Having no luggage to care for, I walked on to Birmingham, where I found the parliamentary train just on the point of starting, and with some hesitation, on account of the severity of the weather, I took my seat in one of the then very much exposed and uncomfortable carriages. We travelled steadily and safely, though slowly along, and reached Rugby Station in the afternoon, where we were to remain, the guard told us, till a fast down-train had passed. All of us hurried as quickly as we could to the large room at this station, where blazing fires and other appliances soon thawed the half-frozen bodies, and loosened the tongues of the numerous and motley passengers. After recovering the use of my benumbed limbs and faculties, I had leisure to look around and survey the miscellaneous assemblage about me.

Two persons had travelled in the same compart-

ment with me from Birmingham, whose exterior, as disclosed by the dim light of the railway carriage, created some surprise that such splendidly-attired, fashionable gentlemen should stoop to journey by the plebeian penny-a-mile train. I could now observe them in a clearer light, and surprise at their apparent condescension vanished at once. To an eye less experienced than mine in the artifices and expedients familiar to a certain class of "swells," they might perhaps have passed muster for what they assumed to be, especially amidst the varied crowd of a "parliamentary;" but their copper finery could not for a moment impose upon me. The watch-chains were, I saw, mosaic; the watches, so frequently displayed, gilt; eye-glasses the same; the coats, fur-collared, and cuffed, were ill-fitting and second-hand; ditto of the varnished boots and renovated velvet waistcoats; while the luxuriant moustaches and whiskers, and flowing wigs, were unmistakably mere *pièces d'occasion*—assumed and diversified at pleasure. They were both apparently about fifty years of age; one of them perhaps one or two years less than that. I watched them narrowly, the more so from their making themselves ostentatiously attentive to a young woman—girl rather she seemed—of a remarkably graceful figure, but whose face I had not yet obtained a glimpse of. They made boisterous way for her to the fire, and were profuse and noisy in their offers of refreshment—all of which, I observed, were peremp-

torily declined. She was dressed in deep, unexpensive mourning; and from her timid gestures and averted head, whenever either of the fellows addressed her, was, it was evident, terrified as well as annoyed by their rude and insolent notice. I quietly drew near to the side of the fireplace at which she stood, and with some difficulty obtained a sight of her features. I was struck with extreme surprise—not so much at her singular beauty, as from an instantaneous conviction that she was known to me, or at least that I had seen her frequently before, but where or when I could not at all call to mind. Again I looked, and my first impression was confirmed. At this moment the elder of the two men I have partially described placed his hand, with a rude familiarity, upon the girl's shoulder, proffering at the same time a glass of hot brandy and water for her acceptance. She turned sharply and indignantly away from the fellow; and looking round as if for protection, caught my eagerly-fixed gaze.

"Mr. Waters!" she impulsively ejaculated. "Oh I am so glad!"

"Yes," I answered, "that is certainly my name; but I scarcely remember—. Stand back, fellow!" I angrily continued, as her tormentor, emboldened by the spirits he had drank, pressed with a jeering grin upon his face towards her, still tendering the brandy and water. "Stand back!" He replied by a curse and a threat. The next moment his flowing wig was

whirling across the room, and he standing with his bullet head bare but for a few locks of iron-gray, in an attitude of speechless rage and confusion, increased by the peals of laughter which greeted his ludicrous, unwigged aspect. He quickly put himself in a fighting attitude, and, backed by his companion, challenged me to battle. This was quite out of the question; and I was somewhat at a loss how to proceed, when the bell announcing the instant departure of the train rang out, my furious antagonist gathered up and adjusted his wig, and we all sallied forth to take our places—the young woman holding fast by my arm, and in a low, nervous voice, begging me not to leave her. I watched the two fellows take their seats, and then led her to the hindmost carriage, which we had to ourselves as far as the next station.

"Are Mrs. Waters and Emily quite well?" said the young woman colouring, and lowering her eyes beneath my earnest gaze, which she seemed for a moment to misinterpret.

"Quite—entirely so," I almost stammered. "You know us then?"

"Surely I do," she replied, reassured by my manner. "But you, it seems," she presently added, with a winning smile, "have quite forgotten little Mary Kingsford,"

"Mary Kingsford!" I exclaimed, almost with a shout. "Why, so it is! But what a transformation a few years have effected!"

"Do you think so? Not *pretty* Mary Kingsford now then, I suppose?" she added, with a light, pleasant laugh.

"You know what I mean, you vain puss you!" I rejoined, quite gleefully; for I was overjoyed at meeting with the gentle, well-remembered playmate of my own eldest girl. We were old familiar friends—almost father and daughter—in an instant.

Little Mary Kingsford, I should state, was, when I left Yorkshire, one of the prettiest, most engaging children I had ever seen; and a petted favourite not only with us, but of every other family in the neighbourhood. She was the only child of Philip and Mary Kingsford—a humble, worthy, and much-respected couple. The father was gardener to Sir Pyott Dalzell, and her mother eked out his wages to a respectable maintenance by keeping a cheap children's school. The change which a few years had wrought in the beautiful child was quite sufficient to account for my imperfect recognition of her; but the instant her name was mentioned, I at once recognised the rare comeliness which had charmed us all in her childhood. The soft brown eyes were the same, though now revealing profounder depths, and emitting a more pensive expression; the hair, though deepened in colour, was still golden; her complexion, lit up as it now was by a sweet blush, was brilliant as ever; whilst her child-person had become matured and developed into womanly symmetry and grace.

The brilliancy of colour vanished from her cheek as I glanced meaningly at her mourning dress.

“Yes,” she murmured, in a sad quivering voice—“yes, father is gone! It will be six months come next Thursday that he died! Mother is well,” she continued more cheerfully after a pause, “in health, but poorly off; and I—and I,” she added with a faint effort at a smile, “am going to London to seek my fortune!”

“To seek your fortune?”

“Yes; you know my cousin, Sophy Clarke? In one of her letters, she said she often saw you.”

“I nodded without speaking. I knew little of Sophia Clarke, except that she was the somewhat gay, coquettish shopwoman of a highly-respectable confectioner in the Strand, whom I shall call by the name of Morris.

“I am to be Sophy’s fellow shop-assistant,” continued Mary Kingsford; “not of course at first at such good wages as she gets. So lucky for me, is it not, since I must go to service? And so kind, too, of Sophy to interest herself for me!”

“Well, it may be so. But surely I have heard—my wife at least has—that you and Richard Westlake were engaged?—Excuse me, Mary, I was not aware the subject was a painful or unpleasant one.”

“Richard’s father,” she replied, with some spirit, “has higher views for his son. It is all off between us now,” she added; “and perhaps it is for the best that it should be so.”

I could have rightly interpreted these words without the aid of the partially-expressed sigh which followed them. The perilous position of so attractive, so inexperienced, so guileless a young creature, amidst the temptations and vanities of London, so painfully impressed and preoccupied me, that I scarcely uttered another word till the rapidly-diminishing rate of the train announced that we neared a station, after which it was probable we should have no further opportunity for private converse.

"Those men—those fellows at Rugby—where did you meet with them?" I inquired.

"About thirty or forty miles below Birmingham, where they entered the carriage in which I was seated. At Birmingham I managed to avoid them."

Little more passed between us till we reached London. Sophia Clarke received her cousin at the Euston station, and was profuse of felicitations and compliments upon her arrival and personal appearance. After receiving a promise from Mary Kingsford to call and take tea with my wife and her old playmate on the following Sunday, I handed the two young women into a cab in waiting, and they drove off. I had not moved away from the spot when a voice a few paces behind me, which I thought I recognised, called out—"Quick, coachee, or you'll lose sight of them!" As I turned quickly round, another cab drove smartly off, which I followed at a run. I found, on reaching Lower Seymour Street, that I was

not mistaken as to the owner of the voice, nor of his purpose. The fellow I had unwigged at Rugby thrust his body half out of the cab window, and pointing to the vehicle which contained the two girls, called out to the driver "to mind and make no mistake." The man nodded intelligence, and lashed his horse into a faster pace. Nothing that I might do could prevent the fellows from ascertaining Mary Kingsford's place of abode; and as that was all that, for the present at least, need be apprehended, I desisted from pursuit, and bent my steps homewards.

Mary Kingsford kept her appointment on the Sunday, and, in reply to our questioning, said she liked her situation very well. Mr. and Mrs. Morris were exceedingly kind to her; so was Sophia. "Her cousin," she added, in reply to a look which I could not repress, "was perhaps a little gay and free of manner, but the best-hearted creature in the world." The two fellows who had followed them had, I found, already twice visited the shop; but their attentions appeared now to be exclusively directed towards Sophia Clarke, whose vanity they not a little gratified. The names they gave were Hartley and Simpson. So entirely guileless and unsophisticated was the gentle country maiden, that I saw she scarcely comprehended the hints and warnings which I threw out. At parting, however, she made me a serious promise that she would instantly apply to me should any difficulty or perplexity overtake her.

I often called in at the confectioner's, and was gratified to find that Mary's modest propriety of behaviour, in a somewhat difficult position, had gained her the goodwill of her employers, who invariably spoke of her with kindness and respect. Nevertheless, the care and care of a London life, with its incessant employment and late hours, soon, I perceived, began to tell upon her health and spirits; and it was consequently with a strong emotion of pleasure I heard from my wife that she had seen a passage in a letter from Mary's mother, to the effect that the elder Westlake was betraying symptoms of yielding to the angry and passionate expostulations of his only son, relative to the enforced breaking off of his engagement with Mary Kingsford. The blush with which she presented the letter was, I was told, very eloquent.

One evening, on passing Morris's shop, I observed Hartley and Simpson there. They were swallowing custards and other confectionary with much gusto; and, from their new and costly habiliments, seemed to be in surprisingly good case. They were smirking and smiling at the cousins with rude confidence; and Sophia Clarke, I was grieved to see, repaid their insulting impertinence by her most elaborate smiles and graces. I passed on; and presently meeting with a brother-detective, who, it struck me, might know something of the two gentlemen, I turned back with him, and pointed them out. A glance sufficed him

"Hartley and Simpson you say?" he remarked, after we had walked away to some distance: "those are only two of their numerous *aliases*. I cannot, however, say that I am as yet on very familiar terms with them; but as I am especially directed to cultivate their acquaintance, there is no doubt we shall be more intimate with each other before long. Gamblers, blacklegs, swindlers, I already know them to be; and I would take odds they are not unfrequently something more, especially when fortune and the bones run cross with them."

"They appear to be in high feather just now," I remarked.

"Yes: they are connected, I suspect, with the gang who cleaned out young Garslade last week in Jermyn Street. I'd lay a trifle," added my friend, as I turned to leave him, "that one or both of them will wear the Queen's livery, gray turned up with yellow, before many weeks are past. Good-bye."

About a fortnight after this conversation, I and my wife paid a visit to Astley's, for the gratification of our youngsters, who had long been promised a sight of the equestrian marvels exhibited at that celebrated amphitheatre. It was the latter end of February; and when we came out of the theatre, we found the weather had changed to dark and sleety, with a sharp, nipping wind. I had to call at Scotland-Yard; my wife and children consequently proceeded home in a cab without me; and after assisting to quell a slight

disturbance originating in a gin-palace close by, I went on my way over Westminster Bridge. The inclement weather had cleared the streets and thoroughfares in a surprisingly short time; so that, excepting myself, no foot-passenger was visible on the bridge till I had about half crossed it, when a female figure, closely muffled up about the head, and sobbing bitterly, passed rapidly by on the opposite side. I turned and gazed after the retreating figure; it was a youthful, symmetrical one; and after a few moments' hesitation, I determined to follow at a distance, and as unobservedly as I could. On the woman sped, without pause or hesitation, till she reached Astley's, where I observed her stop suddenly, and toss her arms in the air with a gesture of desperation. I quickened my steps, which she observing, uttered a slight scream, and darted swiftly off again, moaning and sobbing as she ran. The slight momentary glimpse I had obtained of her features beneath the gas-lamp opposite Astley's suggested a frightful apprehension, and I followed at my utmost speed. She turned at the first cross-street, and I should soon have overtaken her, but that in darting round the corner where she disappeared, I ran full butt against a stout, elderly gentlemen, who was hurrying smartly along out of the weather. What with the suddenness of the shock and the slipperiness of the pavement, down we both reeled; and by the time we had regained our feet, and growled savagely at each other, the young

woman, whoever she was, had disappeared, and more than half an hour's eager search after her proved fruitless. At last I bethought me of hiding at one corner of Westminster Bridge. I had watched impatiently for about twenty minutes, when I observed the object of my pursuit stealing timidly and furtively towards the bridge on the opposite side of the way. As she came nearly abreast of where I stood, I darted forward; she saw, without recognising me, and uttering an exclamation of terror, flew down towards the river, where a number of pieces of balk and other timber were fastened together, forming a kind of loose raft. I followed with desperate haste, for I saw that it was indeed Mary Kingsford, and loudly calling to her by name to stop. She did not appear to hear me, and in a few moments the unhappy girl had gained the end of the timber-raft. One instant she paused with clasped hands upon the brink, and in another had thrown herself into the dark and moaning river. On reaching the spot where she had disappeared, I could not at first see her, in consequence of the dark mourning dress she had on. Presently I caught sight of her, still upborne by her spread clothes, but already carried by the swift current beyond my reach. The only chance was to crawl along a piece of round timber which projected further into the river, and by the end of which she must pass. This I effected with some difficulty; and laying myself out at full length, aiuly endeavoured, with outstretched, straining arms,

to grasp her dress. There was nothing left for it but to plunge in after her. I will confess that I hesitated to do so. I was encumbered with a heavy dress, which there was no time to put off, and moreover, like most inland men, I was but an indifferent swimmer. My indecision quickly vanished. The wretched girl, though gradually sinking, had not yet uttered a cry, or appeared to struggle; but when the chilling waters reached her lips, she seemed to suddenly revive to a consciousness of the horror of her fate: she fought wildly with the engulfing tide, and shrieked piteously for help. Before one could count ten, I had grasped her by the arm, and lifted her head above the surface of the river. As I did so, I felt as if suddenly encased and weighed down by leaden garments, so quickly had my thick clothing and high boots sucked in the water. Vainly, thus burdened and impeded, did I endeavour to regain the raft; the strong tide bore us outwards, and I glared round, in inexpressible dismay, for some means of extrication from the frightful peril in which I found myself involved. Happily, right in the direction the tide was drifting us, a large barge lay moored by a chain-cable. Eagerly I seized and twined one arm firmly round it, and thus partially secure, hallooed with renewed power for assistance. It soon came: a passer-by had witnessed the flight of the girl and my pursuit, and was already hastening with others to our assistance. A wherry was unmoored: guided

by my voice, they soon reached us ; and but a brief interval elapsed before we were safely housed in an adjoining tavern.

A change of dress, with which the landlord kindly supplied me, a blazing fire, and a couple of glasses of hot brandy and water, soon restored warmth and vigour to my chilled and partially-benumbed limbs ; but more than two hours elapsed before Mary, who had swallowed a good deal of water, was in a condition to be removed. I had just sent for a cab, when two police-officers, well known to me, entered the room with official briskness. Mary screamed, staggered towards me, and clinging to my arm, besought me with frantic earnestness to save her.

“ What is the meaning of this ? ” I exclaimed, addressing one of the police-officers.

“ Merely,” said he, “ that the young woman that’s clinging so tight to you has been committing an audacious robbery ”—

“ No—no—no ! ” broke in the terrified girl.

“ Oh ! of course you’ll say so,” continued the officer. “ All I know is, that the diamond brooch was found snugly hid away in her own box. But come, we have been after you for the last three hours ; so you had better come along at once.”

“ Save me ! —save me ! ” sobbed poor Mary, as she tightened her grasp upon my arm, and looked with beseeching agony in my face.

“ Be comforted,” I whispered, “ you shall go home

with me. Calm yourself, Miss Kingsford," I added, in a louder tone ; " I no more believe you have stolen a diamond brooch than that I have."

" Bless you!—bless you!" she gasped, in the intervals of her convulsive sobs.

" There is some wretched misapprehension in this business, I am quite sure," I continued ; " but at all events I shall bail her—for this night, at least."

" Bail her! That is hardly regular."

" No ; but you will tell the superintendent that Mary Kingsford is in my custody, and that I answer for her appearance to-morrow."

The men hesitated, but I stood too well at headquarters for them to do more than hesitate ; and the cab I had ordered being just then announced, I passed with Mary out of the room as quickly as I could, for I feared her senses were again leaving her. The air revived her somewhat, and I lifted her into the cab, placing myself beside her. She appeared to listen in fearful doubt whether I should be allowed to take her with me ; and it was not till the wheels had made a score of revolutions that her fears vanished ; then throwing herself upon my neck in an ecstasy of gratitude, she burst into a flood of tears, and continued till we reached home sobbing on my bosom like a broken-hearted child. She had, I found, been there about ten o'clock to seek me, and being told that I was gone to Astley's, had started off to find me there.

Mary still slept, or at least she had not risen, when

I left home the following morning to endeavour to get at the bottom of the strange accusation preferred against her. I first saw the superintendent, who, after hearing what I had to say, quite approved of all that I had done, and entrusted the case entirely to my care. I next saw Mr. and Mrs. Morris and Sophia Clarke, and then waited upon the prosecutor, a youngish gentleman of the name of Saville, lodging in Essex Street, Strand. One or two things I heard necessitated a visit to other officers of police, incidentally, as I found, mixed up with the affair. By the time all this was done, and an effectual watch had been placed upon Mr. Augustus Saville's movements, evening had fallen, and I wended my way homewards, both to obtain a little rest and hear Mary Kingsford's version of the strange story.

The result of my inquiries may be thus briefly summed up. Ten days before, Sophia Clarke told her cousin that she had orders for Covent-Garden Theatre ; and as it was not one of their busy nights, she thought they might obtain leave to go. Mary expressed her doubt of this, as both Mr. and Mrs. Morris, who were strict, and somewhat fanatical, Dissenters, disapproved of playgoing, especially for young women. Nevertheless Sophia asked, informed Mary that the required permission had been readily accorded, and off they went in high spirits ; Mary especially, who had never been to a theatre in her life before. When there they were joined by Hartley

and Simpson, much to Mary's annoyance and vexation, especially as she saw that her cousin expected them. She had, in fact, accepted the orders from them. At the conclusion of the entertainments they all four came out together, when suddenly there arose a hustling and confusion, accompanied with loud outcries, and a violent swaying to and fro of the crowd. The disturbance was, however, soon quelled, and Mary and her cousin had reached the outer door, when two police-officers seized Hartley and his friend, and insisted upon their going with them. A scuffle ensued; but other officers being at hand, the two men were secured, and carried off. The cousins, terribly frightened, called a coach, and were very glad to find themselves safe at home again. And now it came out that Mr. and Mrs. Morris had been told that they were going to spend the evening at *my* house, and had no idea they were going to the play! Vexed as Mary was at the deception, she was too kindly-tempered to refuse to keep her cousin's secret; especially knowing as she did that the discovery of the deceit Sophia had practised would in all probability be followed by her immediate discharge. Hartley and his friend swaggered on the following afternoon into the shop, and whispered Sophia that their arrest by the police had arisen from a strange mistake, for which the most ample apologies had been offered and accepted. After this matters went on as usual, except that Mary perceived a growing

insolence and familiarity in Hartley's manner towards her. His language was frequently quite unintelligible, and once he asked her plainly "if she did not mean that he should go *shares* in the prize she had lately found?" Upon Mary replying that she did not comprehend him, his look became absolutely ferocious, and he exclaimed, "Oh, that's your game, is it? But don't try it on with me, my good girl, I advise you." So violent did he become, that Mr. Morris was attracted by the noise, and ultimately bundled him, neck and heels, out of the shop. She had not seen either him or his companion since.

On the evening of the previous day, a gentleman whom she never remembered to have seen before, entered the shop, took a seat, and helped himself to a tart. She observed that after a while he looked at her very earnestly, and at length, approaching quite close, said, "You were at Covent-Garden Theatre last Tuesday evening week?" Mary was struck, as she said, all of a heap, for both Mr. and Mrs. Morris were in the shop, and heard the question.

"Oh no, no! you mistake," she said, hurriedly, and feeling at the same time her cheeks kindle into flame.

"Nay, but you were, though," rejoined the gentleman. And then, lowering his voice to a whisper he said, "And let me advise you, if you would avoid exposure and condign punishment, to restore me the diamond brooch you robbed me of that evening."

Mary screamed with terror, and a regular scene

ensued. She was obliged to confess she had told a falsehood in denying she was at the theatre on the night in question, and Mr. Morris after that seemed inclined to believe anything of her. The gentleman persisted in his charge; but at the same time vehemently iterating his assurance that all he wanted was his property; and it was ultimately decided that Mary's boxes, as well as her person, should be searched. This was done; and to her utter consternation the brooch was found, concealed, they said, in a black silk reticule. Denials, asseverations, were vain. Mr. Saville identified the brooch, but once more offered to be content with its restoration. This Mr. Morris, a just, stern man, would not consent to, and he went out to summon a police-officer. Before he returned, Mary, by the advice of both her cousin and Mrs. Morris, had fled the house, and hurried in a state of distraction to find me, with what result the reader already knows.

"It is a wretched business," I observed to my wife, as soon as Mary Kingsford had retired to rest, at about nine o'clock in the evening. "Like you, I have no doubt of the poor girl's perfect innocence; but how to establish it by satisfactory evidence is another matter. I must take her to Bow Street the day after to-morrow."

"Good God, how dreadful! Can nothing be done? What does the prosecutor say his brooch is worth?"

"His uncle," he says, "gave a hundred and twenty

guineas for it. But that signifies little ; for were its worth only a hundred and twenty farthings, compromise is, you know, out of the question."

" I did not mean that. Can you show it me ? I am a pretty good judge of the value of jewels."

" Yes, you can see it." I took it out of the desk in which I had locked it up, and placed it before her. It was a splendid emerald, encircled by large brilliants.

My wife twisted and turned it about, holding it in all sorts of lights, and at last said, " I do not believe that either the emerald or the brilliants are real—that the brooch is, in fact, worth twenty shillings intrinsically."

" Do you say so ?" I exclaimed, as I jumped up from my chair, for my wife's words gave colour and consistency to a dim and faint suspicion which had crossed my mind. " Then this Saville is a manifest liar ; and perhaps confederate with—— But give me my hat : I will ascertain this point at once."

I hurried to a jeweller's shop, and found that my wife's opinion was correct : apart from the workmanship, which was very fine, the brooch was valueless. Conjectures, suspicions, hopes, fears, chased each other with bewildering rapidity through my brain ; and in order to collect and arrange my thoughts, I stepped out of the whirl of the streets into Dolly's Chop-house, and decided, over a quiet glass of negus, upon my plan of operations.

The next morning there appeared at the top of the second column of the ‘Times’ an earnest appeal, worded with careful obscurity, so that only the person to whom it was addressed should easily understand it, to the individual who had lost or been robbed of a false stone and brilliants at the theatre, to communicate with a certain person, whose address I gave, without delay, in order to save the reputation, perhaps the life, of an innocent person.

I was at the address I had given by nine o’clock. Several hours passed without bringing any one, and I was beginning to despair, when a gentleman of the name of Bagshawe was announced : I fairly leaped for joy, for this was beyond my hopes.

A gentleman presently entered, of about thirty years of age, of a distinguished though somewhat dissipated aspect.

“This brooch is yours?” said I, exhibiting it without delay or preface.

“It is ; and I am here to know what your singular advertisement means ?”

I briefly explained the situation of affairs.

“The rascals!” he broke in almost before I had finished : “I will briefly explain it all. A fellow of the name of Hartley, at least that was the name he gave, robbed me, I was pretty sure, of this brooch. I pointed him out to the police and he was taken into custody ; but nothing being found upon him, he was discharged.”

"Not entirely, Mr. Bagshawe, on that account. You refused, when arrived at the station-house, to state what you had been robbed of; and you, moreover, said, in presence of the culprit, that you were to embark with your regiment for India the next day. That regiment, I have ascertained, did embark, as you said it would."

"True; but I had leave of absence, and shall take the Overland route. The truth is, that during the walk to the station house I had leisure to reflect that if I made a formal charge it would lead to awkward disclosures. This brooch is an imitation of one presented me by a valued relative. Losses at play—since, for this unfortunate young woman's sake I *must* part with it—obliged me to part with the original; and I wore this in order to conceal the fact from my relative's knowledge."

"This will, sir," I replied, "prove, with a little management, quite sufficient for all purposes. You have no objection to accompany me to the superintendent?"

"Not in the least; only I wish the devil had the brooch as well as the fellow that stole it."

About half-past five o'clock on the same evening, the street door was quietly opened by the landlord of the house in which Mr. Saville lodged, and I walked into the front room on the first floor, where I found the gentleman I sought languidly reclining on a sofa. He gathered himself smartly up at my appearance,

and looked keenly in my face. He did not appear to like what he read there.

"I did not expect to see you to-day," he said at last.

"No, perhaps not : but I have news for you. Mr. Bagshawe, the owner of the hundred-and-twenty guinea brooch your deceased uncle gave you, did *not* sail for India, and"—

The wretched cur, before I could conclude, was on his knees, begging for mercy with disgusting abjectness. I could have spurned the scoundrel where he crawled.

"Come, sir!" I cried, "let us have no snivelling or humbug: mercy is not in my power, as you ought to know. Strive to deserve it. We want Hartley and Simpson, and cannot find them; you must aid us."

"Oh, yes, to be sure I will!" eagerly rejoined the rascal. "I will go for them at once," he added, with a kind of hesitating assurance.

"Nonsense! *Send* for them, you mean. Do so, and I will wait their arrival."

His note was despatched by a sure hand; and meanwhile I arranged the details of the expected meeting. I, and a friend, whom I momently expected, would ensconce ourselves behind a large screen in the room, whilst Mr. Augustus Saville would run playfully over the charming plot with his two friends, so that we might be able to fully appreciate its merits. Mr. Saville agreed. I rang the

bell, an officer appeared, and we took our posts in readiness. We had scarcely done so when the street-bell rang, and Saville announced the arrival of his confederates. There was a twinkle in the fellow's green eyes which I thought I understood. "Do not try that on, Mr. Augustus Saville," I quietly remarked: "we are but two here, certainly, but there are half-a-dozen in waiting below."

No more was said, and in another minute the friends met. It was a boisterously-jolly meeting, as far as shaking hands and mutual felicitations on each other's good looks and health went. Saville was, I thought, the most obstreperously gay of all three.

"And yet, now I look at you, Saville, closely," said Hartley, "you don't look quite the thing. Have you seen a ghost?"

"No; but this cursed brooch affair worries me."

"Nonsense!—humbug?—it's all right: we are all embarked in the same boat. It's a regular three-handed game. I prigged it; Simmy here whipped it into pretty Mary's reticule, which she, I suppose, never looked into till the row came; and *you* claimed it—a regular merry-go-round, ain't it, eh? Ha! ha! ha!—Ha!"

"Quite so, Mr. Hartley," said I, suddenly facing him, and at the same time stamping on the floor; "as you say, a delightful merry-go-round; and here you perceive," I added, as the officers crowded into the room, "are more gentlemen to join in it."

I must not stain the paper with the curses, imprecations, blasphemies, which for a brief space resounded through the apartment. The rascals were safely and separately locked up a quarter of an hour afterwards ; and before a month had passed away, all three were transported. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that they believed the brooch to be genuine, and of great value.

Mary Kingsford did not need to return to her employ. Westlake the elder withdrew his veto upon his son's choice, and the wedding was celebrated in the following May with great rejoicing; Mary's old playmate officiating as bridemaid, and I as bride's father. The still young couple have now a rather numerous family, and a home blessed with affection, peace, and competence. It was some time, however, before Mary recovered from the shock of her London adventure ; and I am pretty sure that the disagreeable reminiscences inseparably connected in her mind with the metropolis will prevent at least *one* person from being present at the World's Great Fair.

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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FLINT JACKSON.

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FARNHAM hops are world-famous, or at least famous in that huge portion of the world where English ale is drunk, and whereon, I have a thousand times heard and read, the sun never sets. The name, therefore, of the pleasant Surrey village, in and about which the events I am about to relate occurred, is, I may fairly presume, known to many of my readers. I was ordered to Farnham to investigate a case of burglary, committed in the house of a gentleman of the name of Hursley, during the temporary absence of the

family, which had completely nonplussed the unpractised Dogberrys of the place, albeit it was not a riddle at all difficult to read. The premises, it was quickly plain to me, had been broken, not into, but out of ; and a watch being set upon the motions of the very specious and clever person left in charge of the house and property, it was speedily discovered that the robbery had been effected by herself and a confederate of the name of Dawkins, her brother-in-law. Some of the stolen goods were found secreted at his lodgings ; but the most valuable portion, consisting of plate, and a small quantity of jewellery, had disappeared : it had questionless been converted into money, as considerable sums, in sovereigns, were found upon both Dawkins and the woman, Sarah Purday. Now, as it had been clearly ascertained that neither of the prisoners had left Farnham since the burglary, it was manifest there was a receiver near at hand who had purchased the missing articles. Dawkins and Purday were, however, dumb as stones upon the subject ; and nothing occurred to point suspicion till early in the evening previous to the second examination of the prisoners before the magistrates, when Sarah Purday asked for pen, ink, and paper for the purpose of writing to one Mr. Jackson, in whose service she had formerly lived. I happened to be at the prison, and of course took the liberty of carefully unsealing her note and reading it. It revealed nothing ; and save by its extremely cautious wording,

and abrupt peremptory tone, coming from a servant to her former master, suggested nothing. I had carefully reckoned the number of sheets of paper sent into the cell, and now on recounting them found that three were missing. The turnkey returned immediately, and asked for the two other letters she had written. The woman denied having written any other, and for proof pointed to the torn fragments of the missing sheets lying on the floor. These were gathered up and brought to me, but I could make nothing out of them, every word having been carefully run through with the pen, and converted into an unintelligible blot. The request contained in the actually-written letter was one simple enough in itself, merely, "that Mr. Jackson would not on any account fail to provide her, in consideration of past services, with legal assistance on the morrow." The first nine words were strongly underlined; and I made out after a good deal of trouble that the word "pretence" had been partially effaced, and "account" substituted for it.

"She need not have wasted three sheets of paper upon such a nonsensical request as that," observed the turnkey. "Old Jackson wouldn't shell out six-pence to save her or anybody else from the gallows."

"I am of a different opinion; but tell me what sort of a person is this former master of hers?"

"All I know about him is that he's a cross-grained, old curmudgeon, living about a mile out of Farnham,

who scrapes money together by lending small sums upon notes-of-hand at short dates, and at a thundering interest. Flint Jackson folk about here call him."

"At all events, forward the letter at once, and tomorrow we shall see—what we shall see. Good-evening."

It turned out as I anticipated. A few minutes after the prisoners were brought into the justice-room, a Guildford solicitor of much local celebrity arrived, and announced that he appeared for both the inculpated parties. He was allowed a private conference with them, at the close of which he stated that his clients would reserve their defence. They were at once committed for trial, and I overheard the solicitor assure the woman that the ablest counsel on the circuit would be retained on their behalf.

I had no longer a doubt that it was my duty to know something further of this suddenly-generous Flint Jackson, though how to set about it was a matter of considerable difficulty. There was no legal pretence for a search-warrant, and I doubted the prudence of proceeding upon my own responsibility with so astute an old fox as Jackson was represented to be ; for supposing him to be a confederate with the burglars, he had by this time in all probability sent the stolen property away—to London in all likelihood ; and should I find nothing, the consequences of ransacking his house merely because he had provided a former servant with

legal assistance would be serious. Under these circumstances I wrote to head-quarters for instructions, and by return of post received orders to prosecute the inquiry thoroughly, but cautiously, and to consider time as nothing so long as there appeared a chance of fixing Jackson with the guilt of receiving the plunder. Another suspicious circumstance that I have omitted to notice in its place was that the Guildford solicitor tendered bail for the prisoners to any reasonable amount, and named Enoch Jackson as one of the securities. Bail was, however, refused.

There was no need for over-hurrying the business, as the prisoners were committed to the Surrey Spring Assizes, and it was now the season of the hop-harvest—a delightful and hilarious period about Farnham when the weather is fine and the yield abundant. I, however, lost no time in making diligent and minute inquiry as to the character and habits of Jackson, and the result was a full conviction that nothing but the fear of being denounced as an accomplice could have induced such a miserly, iron-hearted rogue to put himself to charges in defence of the imprisoned burglars.

One afternoon, whilst pondering the matter, and at the same time enjoying the prettiest and cheerfulest of rural sights, that of hop-picking, the apothecary at whose house I was lodging—we will call him Mr. Morgan; he was a Welshman—tapped me suddenly on the shoulder, and looking sharply round, I per-

ceived he had something he deemed of importance to communicate.

"What is it?" I said, quickly.

"The oddest thing in the world. There's Flint Jackson, his deaf old woman, and the young people lodging with him, all drinking and boozing away at yon alehouse."

"Show them to me, if you please."

A few minutes brought us to the place of boisterous entertainment, the lower room of which was suffocatingly full of tipplers and tobacco-smoke. We nevertheless contrived to edge ourselves in; and my companion stealthily pointed out the group, who were seated together near the farther window, and then left me to myself.

The appearance of Jackson entirely answered to the popular prefix of Flint attached to his name. He was a wiry, gnarled, heavy-browed, iron-jawed fellow of about sixty, with deep-set eyes aglow with sinister and greedy instincts. His wife, older than he, and as deaf apparently as the door of a dungeon, wore a simpering, imbecile look of wonderment, it seemed to me, at the presence of such unusual and abundant cheer. The young people, who lodged with Jackson, were really a very frank, honest, good-looking couple, though not then appearing to advantage—the countenance of Henry Rogers being flushed and inflamed with drink, and that of his wife clouded with frowns, at the situation in which she found herself, and the

riotous conduct of her husband. Their brief history was this :—They had both been servants in a family living not far distant from Farnham—Sir Thomas Lethbridge's, I understood—when about three or four months previous to the present time Flint Jackson, who had once been in an attorney's office, discovered that Henry Rogers, in consequence of the death of a distant relative in London, was entitled to property worth something like 1500*l.* There were, however, some law difficulties in the way, which Jackson offered, if the business was placed in his hands, to overcome for a consideration, and in the meantime to supply board and lodging and such necessary sums of money as Henry Rogers might require. With this brilliant prospect in view, service became at once utterly distasteful. The fortunate legatee had for some time courted Mary Elkins, one of the ladies maids, a pretty, bright-eyed brunette ; and they were both united in the bonds of holy matrimony on the very day the “warnings” they had given expired. Since then they had lived at Jackson's house in daily expectation of their “fortune,” with which they proposed to start in the public line.

Finding myself unrecognised, I called boldly for a pot and a pipe, and after some manœuvring contrived to seat myself within ear-shot of Jackson and his party. They presented a strange study. Henry Rogers was boisterously excited, and not only drinking freely himself, but treating a dozen fellows round

him, the cost of which he from time to time called upon "Old Flint," as he courteously styled his ancient friend, to discharge.

"Come, fork out, Old Flint!" he cried again and again. "It'll be all right, you know, in a day or two, and a few halfpence over. Shell out, old fellow! What signifies, so you're happy?"

Jackson complied with an affectation of acquiescent gaiety ludicrous to behold. It was evident that each successive pull at his purse was like wrenching a tooth out of his head, and yet, while the dismallest of smiles wrinkled his wolfish mouth, he kept exclaiming: "A fine lad—a fine lad! generous as a prince—generous as a prince! Good Lord, another round! He minds money no more than as if gold was as plentiful as gravel! But a fine generous lad for all that!"

Jackson, I perceived, drank considerably, as if incited thereto by compressed savageness. The pretty young wife would not taste a drop, but tears frequently filled her eyes, and bitterness pointed her words as she vainly implored her husband to leave the place and go home with her. To all her remonstrances the maudlin drunkard replied only by foolery, varied occasionally by an attempt at a line or two of the song of "The Thorn."

"But you *will* plant thorns, Henry," rejoined the provoked wife, in a louder and angrier tone than she ought perhaps to have used—"not only in my bosom,

but your own, if you go on in this sottish, disgraceful way."

"Always quarrelling, always quarrelling!" remarked Jackson, pointedly, towards the bystanders—"always quarrelling!"

"Who is always quarrelling?" demanded the young wife, sharply. "Do you mean me and Henry?"

"I was only saying, my dear, that you don't like your husband to be so generous and free-hearted—that's all," replied Jackson, with a confidential wink at the persons near him.

"Free-hearted and generous! Fool-hearted and crazy, you mean!" rejoined the wife, who was much excited. "And you ought to be ashamed of yourself to give him money for such brutish purposes."

"Always quarrelling, always quarrelling!" iterated Jackson, but this time unheard by Mrs. Rogers—"always, perpetually quarrelling!"

I could not quite comprehend all this. If so large a sum as 1500*l.* was really coming to the young man, why should Jackson wince as he did at disbursing small amounts which he could repay himself with abundant interest? If otherwise—and it was probable he should not be repaid—what meant his eternal, "fine generous lad!" "spirited young man!" and so on? What, above all, meant that look of diabolical hate which shot out from his cavernous eyes towards Henry Rogers when he thought himself unobserved, just after satisfying a fresh claim on his

purse? Much practice in reading the faces and deportment of such men made it pretty clear to me that Jackson's course of action respecting the young man and his money was not yet decided upon in his own mind; that he was still perplexed and irresolute; and hence the apparent contradiction in his words and acts.

Henry Rogers at length dropped asleep, with his head upon one of the settle-tables; Jackson sank into sullen silence; the noisy room grew quiet; and I came away.

I was impressed with a belief that Jackson entertained some sinister design against his youthful and inexperienced lodgers, and I determined to acquaint them with my suspicions. For this purpose Mr. Morgan, who had a patient living near Jackson's house, undertook to invite them to tea on some early evening, on pretence that he had heard of a tavern that might suit them when they should receive their fortune. Let me confess, too, that I had another design besides putting the young people on their guard against Jackson. I thought it very probable that it would not be difficult to glean from them some interesting and suggestive particulars concerning the ways, means, practices, outgoings and incomings, of their worthy landlord's household.

Four more days passed unprofitably away, and I was becoming weary of the business, when about five o'clock in the afternoon the apothecary galloped up to

his door on a borrowed horse, jumped off with surprising celerity, and with a face as white as his own magnesia, burst out as he hurried into the room where I was sitting: "Here's a pretty kettle of fish! Henry Rogers has been poisoned, and by his wife!"

"Poisoned!"

"Yes, poisoned; although thanks to my being on the spot, I think he will recover. But I must instantly to Dr. Edwards: I will tell you all when I return."

The promised "all" was this: Morgan was passing slowly by Jackson's house, in the hope of seeing either Mr. or Mrs. Rogers, when the servant-woman, Jane Riddet, ran out and begged him to come in, as their lodger had been taken suddenly ill. Ill indeed! The surface of his body was cold as death, and the apothecary quickly discovered that he had been poisoned with sulphuric acid (oil of vitrol), a quantity of which he, Morgan, had sold a few days previously to Mrs. Rogers, who, when purchasing it, said Mr. Jackson wanted it to apply to some warts that annoyed him. Morgan fortunately knew the proper remedy, and desired Jackson, who was in the room, and seemingly very anxious and flurried, to bring some soap instantly, a solution of which he proposed to give immediately to the seemingly dying man. The woman-servant was gone to find Mrs. Rogers, who had left about ten minutes before, having first made the tea in which the poison had been taken. Jackson hurried out of the

apartment, but was gone so long that Morgan, becoming impatient, scraped a quantity of plaster off the wall, and administered it with the best effect. At last Jackson came back, and said there was unfortunately not a particle of soap in the house. A few minutes afterwards the young wife, alarmed at the woman-servant's tidings, flew into the room in an agony of alarm and grief. Simulated alarm, crocodile grief, Mr. Morgan said; for there could, in his opinion, be no doubt that she had attempted to destroy her husband. Mr. Jackson, on being questioned, peremptorily denied that he had ever desired Mrs. Rogers to procure sulphuric acid for him, or had received any from her—a statement which so confounded the young woman that she instantly fainted. The upshot was that Mrs. Rogers was taken into custody and lodged in prison.

This terrible news flew through Farnham like wildfire. In a few minutes it was upon everybody's tongue: the hints of the quarrelsome life the young couple led, artfully spread by Jackson, were recalled, and no doubt appeared to be entertained of the truth of the dreadful charge. I had no doubt either; but my conviction was not that of the Farnham folk. This, then, was the solution of the struggle I had seen going on in Jackson's mind; this the realisation of the dark thought which I had imperfectly read in the sinister glances of his restless eyes. He had intended to destroy both the husband and wife—the one

by poison, and the other by the law! Doubtless, then, the £1500*l.* had been obtained, and this was the wretched man's infernal device for retaining it! I went over with Morgan early the next morning to see the patient, and found that, thanks to the prompt antidote administered, and Dr. Edwards's subsequent active treatment, he was rapidly recovering. The still-suffering young man, I was glad to find, would not believe for a moment in his wife's guilt. I watched the looks and movements of Jackson attentively—a scrutiny which he, now aware of my vocation, by no means appeared to relish.

"Pray," said I, suddenly addressing Riddet, the woman-servant—"pray, how did it happen that you had no soap in such a house as this yesterday evening?"

"No soap!" echoed the woman with a stare of surprise. "Why"—

"No—no soap," hastily broke in her master with loud and menacing emphasis. "There was not a morsel in the house. I bought some afterwards in Farnham."

The cowed and bewildered woman slunk away. I was more than satisfied; and judging by Jackson's countenance, which changed beneath my look to the colour of the lime-washed wall against which he stood, he surmised that I was.

My conviction, however, was not evidence, and I felt that I should need even more than my wonted

good-fortune to bring the black crime home to the real perpetrator. For the present, at all events, I must keep silence—a resolve I found hard to persist in at the examination of the accused wife, an hour or two afterwards, before the county magistrates. Jackson had hardened himself to iron, and gave his lying evidence with ruthless self-possession. He had *not* desired Mrs. Rogers to purchase sulphuric acid; had *not* received any from her. In addition also to his testimony that she and her husband were always quarrelling, it was proved by a respectable person that high words had passed between them on the evening previous to the day the criminal offence was committed, and that foolish, passionate expressions had escaped her about wishing to be rid of such a drunken wretch. This evidence, combined with the medical testimony, appeared so conclusive to the magistrates, that, spite of the unfortunate woman's wild protestations of innocence, and the rending agony which convulsed her frame, and almost choked her utterance, she was remanded to prison till that day week, when, the magistrates informed her, she would be again brought up for the merely formal completion of the depositions and be then fully committed on the capital charge.

I was greatly disturbed, and walked for two or three hours about the quiet neighbourhood of Farnham, revolving a hundred fragments of schemes for bringing the truth to light, without arriving at any feasible

conclusion. One only mode of procedure seemed to offer, and that but dimly, a hope of success. It was, however, the best I could hit upon, and I directed my steps towards the Farnham prison. Sarah Purday had not yet, I remembered, been removed to the county jail at Guildford.

"Is Sarah Purday," I asked the turnkey, "more reconciled to her position than she was?"

"She's just the same—bitter as gall, and venomous as a viper."

This woman, I should state, was a person of fierce will and strong passions, and in early life had been respectably situated.

"Just step into her cell," I continued, "upon some excuse or other, and carelessly drop a hint that if she could prevail upon Jackson to get her brought by *habeas* before a judge in London, there could be no doubt of her being bailed."

The man stared, but after a few words of pretended explanation, went off to do as I requested. He was not long gone. "She's all in a twitteration at the thoughts of it," he said; "and must have pen, ink, and paper without a moment's delay, bless her consequence!"

These were supplied; and I was soon in possession of her letter, couched cautiously, but more peremptorily than the former one. I need hardly say it did not reach its destination. She passed the next day in a state of feverish impatience; and no answer

returning, wrote again, her words this time conveying an evident though indistinct threat. I refrained from visiting her till two days had thus passed, and found her, as I expected, eaten up with fury. She glared at me as I entered the cell like a chained tigress.

"You appear vexed," I said, "no doubt, because Jackson declines to get you bailed. He ought not to refuse you such a trifling service, considering all things."

"All what things?" replied the woman, eyeing me fiercely.

"That you know best, though I have a shrewd guess."

"What do you guess? and what are you driving at?"

"I will deal frankly with you, Sarah Purday. In the first place, you must plainly perceive that your friend Jackson has cast you off—abandoned you to your fate; and that fate will, there can be no doubt, be transportation."

"Well," she impatiently snarled, "suppose so; what then?"

"This—that you can help yourself in this difficulty by helping me."

"As how?"

"In the first place, give me the means of convicting Jackson of having received the stolen property."

"Ha! How do you know that?"

"Oh, I know it very well—as well almost as you

do. But this is not my chief object ; there is another, far more important one," and I ran over the incidents relative to the attempt at poisoning. "Now," I resumed, "tell me, if you will, your opinion on this matter."

"That it was Jackson administered the poison, and certainly not the young woman," she replied, with vengeful promptness.

"My own conviction ! This, then, is my proposition : you are sharp-witted, and know this fellow's ways, habits, and propensities thoroughly—I, too, have heard something of them—and it strikes me that you could suggest some plan, some device grounded on that knowledge, whereby the truth might come to light."

The woman looked fixedly at me for some time without speaking. As I meant fairly and honestly by her, I could bear her gaze without shrinking.

"Supposing I could assist you," she at last said, "how would that help me ?"

"It would help you greatly. You would no doubt be still convicted of the burglary, for the evidence is irresistible ; but if in the meantime you should have been instrumental in saving the life of an innocent person, and of bringing a great criminal to justice, there cannot be a question that the Queen's mercy would be extended to you, and the punishment be merely a nominal one."

"If I were sure of that!" she murmured, with a

burning scrutiny in her eyes, which were still fixed upon my countenance—"if I were sure of that! But you are misleading me."

"Believe me, I am not. I speak in perfect sincerity. Take time to consider the matter. I will look in again in about an hour; and, pray, do not forget that it is your sole and last chance."

I left her, and did not return till more than three hours had passed away. Sarah Purday was pacing the cell in a frenzy of inquietude.

"I thought you had forgotten me. Now," she continued with rapid vehemence, "tell me, on your word and honour as a man, do you truly believe that if I can effectually assist you it will avail me with Her Majesty?"

"I am as positive it will as I am of my own life."

"Well, then, I *will* assist you. First, then, Jackson was a confederate with Dawkins and myself, and received the plate and jewelry, for which he paid us less than one-third of the value."

"Rogers and his wife were not, I hope, cognizant of this?"

"Certainly not; but Jackson's wife and the woman-servant, Riddet, were. I have been turning the other business over in my mind," she continued, speaking with increasing emotion and rapidity; "and oh, believe me, Mr. Waters, if you can, that it is not solely a selfish motive which induces me to aid in

saving Mary Rogers from destruction. I was once myself—— Ah, God !”

Tears welled up to the fierce eyes, but they were quickly brushed away, and she continued somewhat more calmly: “ You have heard, I daresay, that Jackson has a strange habit of talking in his sleep ?”

“ I have, and that he once consulted Morgan as to whether there was any cure for it. It was that which partly suggested ”——

“ It is, I believe, a mere fancy of his,” she interrupted; “ or at any rate the habit is not so frequent, nor what he says so intelligible, as he thoroughly believes and fears it, from some former circumstances, to be. His deaf wife cannot undeceive him, and he takes care never even to doze except in her presence only.”

“ This is not, then, so promising as I hoped.”

“ Have patience. It is full of promise, as we will manage. Every evening Jackson frequents a low gambling-house, where he almost invariably wins small sums at cards—by craft, no doubt, as he never drinks there. When he returns home at about ten o'clock, his constant habit is to go into the front-parlour, where his wife is sure to be sitting at that hour. He carefully locks the door, helps himself to a glass of brandy and water—plentifully of late—and falls asleep in his arm-chair; and there they both dose away, sometimes till one o'clock—always till past twelve.”

"Well; but I do not see how"—

"Hear me out, if you please. Jackson never wastes a candle to drink or sleep by, and at this time of the year there will be no fire. If he speaks to his wife he does not expect her, from her wooden deafness, to answer him. Do you begin to perceive my drift?"

"Upon my word, I do not."

"What—if upon awakening, Jackson finds that his wife is Mr. Waters, and that Mr. Waters relates to him all that he has disclosed in his sleep: that Mr. Hursley's plate is buried in the garden near the lilac-tree; that he, Jackson, received a thousand pounds six weeks ago of Henry Rogers's fortune, and that the money is now in the recess on the top-landing, the key of which is in his breast-pocket; that he was the receiver of the plate stolen from a house in the Close at Salisbury a twelvemonth ago, and sold in London for four hundred and fifty pounds. All this hurled at him," continued the woman, with wild energy and flashing eyes—"what else might not a bold, quick-witted man make him believe he had confessed, revealed in his brief sleep?"

I had been sitting on a bench; but as these rapid disclosures burst from her lips, and I saw the use to which they might be turned, I rose slowly and in some sort involuntarily to my feet, lifted up, as it were, by the energy of her fiery words.

"God reward you!" I exclaimed, shaking both her hands in mine. "You have, unless I blunder, rescued

an innocent woman from the scaffold. I see it all. Farewell!"

"Mr. Waters!" she exclaimed, in a changed, palpitating voice, as I was passing forth; "when all is done, you will not forget me?"

"That I will not, by my own hopes of mercy in the hereafter. Adieu!"

At a quarter past nine that evening I, accompanied by two Farnham constables, knocked at the door of Jackson's house. Henry Rogers, I should state, had been removed to the village. The door was opened by the woman-servant, and we went in. "I have a warrant for your arrest, Jane Riddet," I said, "as an accomplice in the plate-stealing the other day. There, don't scream, but listen to me." I then intimated the terms upon which alone she could except favour. She tremblingly promised compliance; and after placing the constables outside, in concealment, but within hearing, I proceeded to the parlour, secured the terrified old woman, and confined her safely in a distant out-house.

"Now, Riddet," I said, "quick with one of the old lady's gowns, a shawl, a cap, *etcetera*." These were brought, and I returned to the parlour. It was a roomy apartment, with small, diamond-paned windows, and just then but very faintly illuminated by the star-light. There were two large high-backed easy-chairs, and I prepared to take possession of the one recently vacated by Jackson's wife. "You must

perfectly understand," were my parting words to the trembling servant, "that we intend standing no nonsense with either you or your master. You cannot escape; but if you let Mr. Jackson in as usual, and he enters this room as usual, no harm will befall you; if otherwise, you will be unquestionably transported. Now, go."

My toilet was not so easily accomplished as I thought it would be. The gown did not meet at the back by about a foot; that, however, was of little consequence, as the high chair concealed the deficiency; neither did the shortness of the sleeves matter much, as the ample shawl could be made to hide my too great length of arm; but the skirt was scarcely lower than a Highlander's, and how the deuce I was to crook my booted legs up out of view, even in that gloomy starlight, I could hardly imagine. The cap also was far too small; still, with an ample kerchief in my hand, my whiskers might, I thought, be concealed. I was still fidgeting with these arrangements when Jackson knocked at his door. The servant admitted him without remark, and he presently entered the room, carefully locked the door, and jolted down, so to speak, in the fellow easy-chair to mine.

He was silent for a few moments, and then he bawled out: "She'll swing for it, they say—swing for it, d'ye hear, dame? But no, of course she don't—deafer and deafer, deafer and deafer every day. It'll

be a precious good job when the parson says his last prayers over her as well as others."

He then got up, and went to a cupboard. I could hear—for I dared not look up—by the jingling of glasses and the outpouring of liquids that he was helping himself to his spirituous sleeping-draughts. He reseated himself, and drank in moody silence, except now and then mumbling drowsily to himself, but in so low a tone that I could make nothing out of it save an occasional curse or blasphemy. It was nearly eleven o'clock before the muttered self-communing ceased, and his heavy head sank upon the back of the easy chair. He was very restless, and it was evident that even his sleeping brain laboured with affrighting and oppressive images; but the mutterings, as before he slept, were confused and indistinct. At length—half an hour had perhaps thus passed—the troubled moanings became for a few moments clearly audible. "Ha—ha—ha!" he burst out, "how are you off for soap? Ho—ho! done there, my boy; ha—ha! But no—no. Wall-plaster! Who could have thought it? But for that I—I— What do you stare at me so for, you infernal blue-bottle? You—You"—Again the dream-utterance sank into indistinctness, and I comprehended nothing more.

About half-past twelve o'clock he awoke, rose, stretched himself, and said: "Come, dame, let's to bed; it's getting chilly here."

"Dame" did not answer, and he again went towards the cupboard. "Here's a candle-end will do for us," he muttered. A lucifer-match was drawn across the wall, he lit the candle, and stumbled towards me, for he was scarcely yet awake. "Come, dame, come! Why, thee beest sleeping like a dead un! Wake up, will thee—— Ah! murder! thieves! mur"—

My grasp was on the wretch's throat; but there was no occasion to use force: he recognized me, and nerveless, paralysed, sank on the floor incapable of motion much less of resistance, and could only gaze in my face in dumb affright and horror.

"Give me the key of the recess up-stairs, which you carry in your breast-pocket. In your sleep, unhappy man, you have revealed everything."

An inarticulate shriek of terror replied to me. I was silent; and presently he gasped: "Wha—at, what have I said?"

"That Mr. Hurtley's plate is buried in the garden by the lilac-tree; that you have received a thousand pounds belonging to the man you tried to poison; that you netted four hundred and fifty pounds by the plate stolen at Salisbury; that you dexterously contrived to slip the sulphuric acid into the tea unseen by Henry Rogers's wife."

The shriek or scream was repeated, and he was for several moments speechless with consternation. A ray of hope gleaned suddenly in his flaming eyes.

"It is true—it is true!" he hurriedly ejaculated; "useless—useless—useless to deny it. But you are alone, and poor, poor, no doubt. A thousand pounds!—more, more than that; *two* thousand pounds in gold—gold, all in gold—I will give you to spare me, to let me escape!"

"Where did you hide the soap on the day when you confess you tried to poison Henry Rogers?"

"In the recess you spoke of. But think! Two thousand pounds in gold—all in gold"—

As he spoke, I suddenly grasped the villain's hands, pressed them together, and in another instant the snapping of a handcuff pronounced my answer. A yell of anguish burst from the miserable man, so loud and piercing, that the constables outside hurried to the outer-door, and knocked hastily for admittance. They were let in by the servant-woman; and in half an hour afterwards the three prisoners—Jackson, his wife, and Jane Riddet—were safe in Farnham prison.

A few sentences will conclude this narrative. Mary Rogers was brought up on the following day, and, on my evidence, discharged. Her husband, I have heard, has since proved a better and a wiser man. Jackson was convicted at the Guildford assize of guiltily receiving the Hursley plate, and sentenced to transportation for life. This being so, the graver charge of attempting to poison was not pressed. There was no moral doubt of his guilt; but the legal proof of it rested solely on his own hurried contes-

sion, which counsel would no doubt have contended ought not to be received. His wife and the servant were leniently dealt with.

Sarah Purday was convicted, and sentenced to transportation. I did not forget my promise; and a statement of the previously-narrated circumstances having been drawn up and forwarded to the Queen and the Home Secretary, a pardon, after some delay, was issued. There were painful circumstances in her history which, after strict inquiry, told favourably for her. Several benevolent persons interested themselves in her behalf, and she was sent out to Canada, where she had some relatives, and has, I believe, prospered there.

This affair caused considerable hubbub at the time, and much admiration was expressed by the country people at the boldness and dexterity of the London "runner;" whereas, in fact, the successful result was entirely attributable to the opportune revelations of Sarah Purday.

# Recollections of a Detective Police - Officer.

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## THE MONOMANIAC.

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THE following narrative relates more to medical than to criminal history ; but as the affair came in some degree under my notice as a public officer, I have thought it might not be altogether out of place in these slight outlines of police experience. Strange and unaccountable as it may at first appear, its general truth will hardly be questioned by those who have had opportunities of observing the fantastic delusions which haunt and dominate the human brain in certain phases of mental aberration.

On arriving in London in 1831, I took lodgings at a Mr. Renshawe's, in Mile-End Road, not far from the turnpike-gate. My inducement to do so, was partly the cheapness and neatness of the accommodation, partly that the landlord's maternal uncle, a Mr. Oxley, was slightly known to me. Henry Renshawe I knew by reputation only, he having left Yorkshire ten or eleven years before, and even that knowledge was slight and vague. I had heard that a tragical event had cast a deep shadow over his after-life; that he had been for some months the inmate of a private lunatic asylum; and that some persons believed his brain had never thoroughly recovered its original healthy action. In this opinion both my wife and myself very soon concurred; and yet I am not sure that we could have given a satisfactory reason for such belief. He was, it is true, usually kind and gentle, even to the verge of simplicity, but his general mode of expressing himself and conducting business was quite coherent and sensible; although, in spite of his resigned cheerfulness of tone and manner, it was at times quite evident, that whatever the mental hurt he had received, it had left a rankling, perhaps remorseful, sting behind. A small, well executed portrait in his sitting-room suggested a conjecture of the nature of the calamity which had befallen him. It was that of a fair, mild-eyed, very young woman, but of a pensive, almost mournful, cast of features, as if the coming event, briefly recorded in the lower right-hand corner

of the painting, had already, during life and health, cast its projecting shadow over her. That brief record was this :—"Laura Hargreaves, born 1804; drowned 1821." No direct allusion to the picture ever passed his lips in my hearing, although, from being able to chat together of Yorkshire scenes and times, we speedily became excellent friends. Still, there were not wanting, from time to time, significant indications, though difficult to place in evidence, that the fire of insanity had not been wholly quenched, but still smouldered and glowed beneath the habit-hardened crust which concealed it from the careless or casual observer. Exciting circumstances, not very long after my arrival in the metropolis, unfortunately kindled those brief wild sparkles into a furious and consuming flame.

Mr. Renshawe was in fair circumstances—that is, his income, derived from funded property alone, was nearly 300*l.* a-year; but his habits were close, thrifty, almost miserly. His personal appearance was neat and gentlemanly, but he kept no servant. A charwoman came once a-day to arrange his chamber and perform other household work, and he usually dined, very simply, at a coffee-house or tavern. His house, with the exception of a sitting and bed-room, was occupied by lodgers; amongst these was a pale weakly-looking young man, of the name of Irwin. He was suffering from pulmonary consumption—a disease induced, I was informed, by his careless folly

in remaining in his wet clothes after having assisted, during the greater part of the night, at a large fire at a coach-factory. His trade was in gold and silver lace-work—bullion for epaulettes, and so on ; and as he had a good connection with several West-end establishments, his business appeared to be a thriving one ; so much so, that he usually employed several assistants of both sexes. He occupied the first-floor, and a workshop at the end of the garden. His wife, a pretty-featured, well-formed, graceful young woman, of not more than two or three-and-twenty, was, they told me, the daughter of a schoolmaster, and certainly had been gently and carefully nurtured. They had one child, a sprightly, curly-haired, bright-eyed boy, nearly four years old. The wife, Ellen Irwin, was reputed to be a first-rate hand at some of the lighter parts of her husband's business ; and her efforts to lighten his toil, and compensate by increased exertion for his daily diminishing capacity for labour, were unwearying and incessant. Never have I seen a more gentle, thoughtful tenderness, than was displayed by that young wife towards her suffering, and sometimes not quite evenly-tempered, partner, who, however, let me add, appeared to reciprocate truthfully her affection ; all the more so, perhaps, that he knew their time together upon earth had already shrunk to a brief span. In my opinion, Ellen Irwin was a handsome, even an elegant young person ; this, however, is in some degree a matter of taste. But no one could

deny that the gentle kindness, the beaming compassion, that irradiated her features as she tended the fast-sinking invalid, rendered her at such times absolutely beautiful—*angelised* her, to use an expression of my wife's, with whom she was a prime favourite. I was self-debating for about the twentieth time one evening, where it was I had formerly seen her, with that sad, mournful look of hers; for seen her I was sure I had, and not long since either. It was late; I had just returned home; my wife was in the sick-room, and I entered it with two or three oranges:—“Oh, now I remember,” I suddenly exclaimed, just above my breath; “the picture in Mr. Renshawe's room! What a remarkable coincidence!”

A low, chuckling laugh, close at my elbow, caused me to turn quickly towards the door. Just within the threshold stood Mr. Renshawe, looking like a white stone image rather than a living man, but for the fierce sparkling of his strangely-gleaming eyes, and the mocking, triumphant curl of his lips. “You, too, have at last observed it, then?” he muttered, faintly echoing the under-tone in which I spoke: “I have known the truth for many weeks.” The manner, the expression, not the words, quite startled me. At the same moment a cry of women rang through the room, and I immediately seized Mr. Renshawe by the arm, and drew him forcibly away, for there was that in his countenance which should not meet the eyes of a dying man.

"What were you saying? What truth have you known for weeks?" I asked, as soon as we had reached his sitting-room.

Before he could answer, another wailing sound ascended from the sick-room. Lightning leaped from Renshawe's lustrous, dilated eyes, and the exulting laugh again, but louder, burst from his lips: "Ha! ha!" he fiercely exclaimed. "I know that cry! It is Death's!—Death's! Thrice-blessed death, whom I have so often ignorantly cursed! But that," he added quickly, and peering sharply in my face, "was when, as you know, people said"—and he ground his teeth with rage—"people said I was crazed—mad!"

"What can you mean by this wild talk, my friend?" I replied, in as unconcerned and quieting a tone as I could immediately assume. "Come, sit down: I was asking the meaning of your strange words below, just now?"

"The meaning of my words? You know as well as I do. Look there!"

"At the painting? Well?"

"You have seen the original," he went on with the same excited tone and gestures. "It crossed me like a flash of lightning. Still, it is strange she does not know me. It is sure she does not! But I am changed, no doubt—sadly changed!" he added, dejectedly, as he looked in a mirror.

"Can you mean that I have seen Laura Hargreaves

here?" I stammered, thoroughly bewildered. "She who was drowned ten or eleven years ago?"

"To be sure—to be sure! It was so believed, I admit, by everybody—by myself, and the belief drove me mad! And yet, I now remember, when at times I was calm—when the pale face, blind staring eyes, and dripping hair, ceased for awhile to pursue and haunt me, the low, sweet voice and gentle face came back, and I knew she lived, though all denied it. But look, it is her very image!" he added fiercely, his glaring eyes flashing from the portrait to my face alternately.

"Whose image?"

"Whose image!—Why, Mrs. Irwin's, to be sure. You yourself admitted it just now." I was so confounded, that for several minutes I remained stupidly and silently staring at the man. At length I said, "Well, there *is* a likeness, though not so great as I imagined"—

"It is false!" he broke in furiously. "It is her very self."

"We'll talk of that to-morrow. You are ill, over-excited, and must go to bed. I hear Dr. Garland's voice below; he shall come to you."

"No—no—no!" he almost screamed. "Send me no doctors; I hate doctors! But I'll go to bed—since—you wish it; but no doctors! Not for the world!" As he spoke, he shrank coweringly backwards, out of the room; his wavering, unquiet eyes

fixed upon mine as long as we remained within view of each other : a moment afterwards, I heard him dart into his chamber, and bolt and double-lock the door.

It was plain that lunacy, but partially subdued, had resumed its former mastery over the unfortunate gentleman. But what an extraordinary delusion ! I took a candle, and examined the picture with renewed curiosity. It certainly bore a strong resemblance to Mrs. Irwin : the brown, curling hair, the pensive eyes, the pale, fairness of complexion, were the same ; but it was scarcely more girlish, more youthful, than the young matron was now, and the original, had she lived, would have been by this time approaching to thirty years of age ! I went softly down stairs and found, as I feared, that George Irwin was gone. My wife came weeping out of the death-chamber, accompanied by Dr. Garland, to whom I forthwith related what had just taken place. He listened with attention and interest ; and after some sage observations upon the strange fancies which now and then take possession of the minds of monomaniacs, agreed to see Mr. Renshawe at ten the next morning. I was not required upon duty till eleven ; and if it were in the physician's opinion desirable, I was to write at once to the patient's uncle, Mr. Oxley.

Mr. Renshawe, was, I heard, stirring before seven o'clock, and the charwoman informed me, that he had taken his breakfast as usual, and appeared to be

in cheerful, almost high spirits. The physician was punctual: I tapped at the sitting-room door, and was desired to come in. Mr. Renshawe was seated at a table with some papers before him, evidently determined to appear cool and indifferent. He could not, however, repress a start of surprise, almost of terror, at the sight of the physician, and a paleness, followed by a hectic flush, passed quickly over his countenance. I observed, too, that the portrait was turned with its face towards the wall.

By a strong effort, Mr. Renshawe regained his simulated composure, and in reply to Dr. Garland's professional inquiry, as to the state of his health, said with a forced laugh: "My friend Waters, has, I suppose, been amusing you with the absurd story that made him stare so last night. It is exceedingly droll, I must say, although many persons, otherwise acute enough, cannot, except upon reflection, comprehend a jest. There was John Kemble, the tragedian, for instance, who"—

"Never mind John Kemble, my dear sir," interrupted Dr. Garland. "Do, pray, tell us the story over again. I love an amusing jest."

Mr. Renshawe hesitated for an instant, and then said with reserve, almost dignity of manner: "I do not know, sir"—his face, by the way, was determinedly averted from the cool, searching gaze of the physician—"I do not know, sir, that I am obliged to find you in amusement; and as your presence here

was not invited, I shall be obliged by your leaving the room as quickly as may be."

"Certainly—certainly, sir. I am exceedingly sorry to have intruded, but I am sure you will permit me to have a peep at this wonderful portrait."

Renshawe sprang impulsively forward to prevent the doctor reaching it. He was too late; and Dr. Garland, turning sharply round with the painting in his hand, literally transfixes him in an attitude of surprise and consternation. Like the Ancient Mariner, he held him by his glittering eye, but the spell was not an enduring one. "Truly," remarked Dr. Garland, as he found the kind of mesmeric influence he had exerted beginning to fail, "not so *very* bad a chance resemblance; especially about the eyes and mouth"—

"This is very extraordinary conduct," broke in Mr. Renshawe: "and I must again request that you will both leave the room."

It was useless to persist, and we almost immediately went away. "Your impression, Mr. Waters," said the physician as he was leaving the house, "is, I dare say, the true one; but he is on his guard now, and it will be prudent to wait for a fresh outbreak before acting decisively; more especially as the hallucination appears to be quite a harmless one."

This was not, I thought, quite so sure, but of course I acquiesced, as in duty bound; and matters

went on pretty much as usual for seven or eight weeks, except that Mr. Renshawe manifested much aversion towards myself personally, and at last served me with a written notice to quit at the end of the term previously stipulated for. There was still some time to that; and, in the meanwhile, I caused a strict watch to be set, as far as was practicable without exciting observation, upon our landlord's words and acts.

Ellen Irwin's first tumult of grief subsided, the next and pressing question related to her own and infant son's subsistence. An elderly man of the name of Tomlins was engaged as foreman; and it was hoped the business might still be carried on with sufficient profit. Mr. Renshawe's manner, though at times indicative of considerable nervous irritability, was kind and respectful to the young widow; and I began to hope that the delusion he had for awhile laboured under had finally passed away.

The hope was a fallacious one. We were sitting at tea on a Sunday evening, when Mrs. Irwin, pale and trembling with fright and nervous agitation, came hastily in with her little boy in her hand. I correctly divined what had occurred. In reply to my hurried questioning, the astounded young matron told me in substance, that within the last two or three days Mr. Renshawe's strange behaviour and disjointed talk had both bewildered and alarmed her. He vaguely

intimated that she, Ellen Irwin, was really Laura somebody else—that she had kept company with him, Mr. Renshawe, in Yorkshire, before she knew poor George—with many other strange things he muttered rather than spoke out; and especially that it was owing to her son reminding her continually of his father, that she pretended not to have known Mr. Renshawe twelve or thirteen years ago. “In short,” added the young women with tears and blushes, “he is utterly crazed; for he asked me just now to marry him—which I would not do for the Indies—and is gone away in a passion to find a paper that will prove, he says, I am that other Laura something.”

There was something so ludicrous in all this, however vexatious and insulting under the circumstances—the recent death of the husband, and the young widow’s unprotected state—that neither of us could forbear laughing at the conclusion of Mrs. Irwin’s story. It struck me, too, that Renshawe had conceived a real and ardent passion for the very comely and interesting person before us—first prompted, no doubt, by her accidental likeness to the portrait; and that some mental flaw or other caused him to confound her with the Laura who had in early life excited the same emotion in his mind.

Laughable as the matter was in one sense, there was—and the fair widow had noticed as well as myself—a serious, menacing expression in the man’s eye

not to be trifled with; and at her earnest request, we accompanied her to her own apartment, to which Renshawe had threatened soon to return. We had not been a minute in the room, when his hurried step was heard approaching, and Mrs. Waters and I stepped hastily into an adjoining closet, where we could hear and partly see all that passed. Renshawe's speech trembled with fervency and anger as he broke at once into the subject with which his disordered brain was reeling.

"You will not dare to say, will you, that you do not remember this song—that these pencil-marks in the margin were not made by you thirteen years ago?" he menacingly ejaculated.

"I know nothing about the song, Mr. Renshawe," rejoined the young women with more spirit than she might have exhibited but for my near presence. "It is really such nonsense. Thirteen years ago I was only about nine years of age."

"You persist, then, unfeeling woman, in this cruel deception! After all, too, that I have suffered: the days of gloom, the nights of horror, since that fearful moment when I beheld you dragged, a lifeless corpse, from the water, and they told me you were dead!"

"Dead! Gracious goodness, Mr. Renshawe, don't go on in this shocking way! I was never dragged out of a pond, nor supposed to be dead—never! You quite frighten one."

"Then you and I, your sister, and that thrice-accursed Bedford, did not, on the 7th of August 1821, go for a sail on the piece of water at Lowfield, and the skiff was not, in the deadly, sudden, jealous strife between him and me, accidentally upset? But I know how it is: it is this brat, and the memories he recalls, that'—

Mrs. Irwin screamed, and I stepped sharply into the room. The grasp of the lunatic was on the child's throat. I loosed it somewhat roughly, throwing him off with a force that brought him to the ground. He rose quickly, glared at me with tiger-like ferocity, and then darted out of the room. The affair had become serious, and the same night I posted a letter to Yorkshire, informing Mr. Oxley of what had occurred, and suggesting the propriety of his immediately coming to London. Measures were also taken for securing Mrs. Irwin and her son from molestation.

But the cunning of lunacy is not easily baffled. On returning home the fourth evening after the despatch of my letter, I found the house and immediate neighbourhood in the wildest confusion. My own wife was in hysterics; Mrs. Irwin, I was told by half-a-dozen tongues at once, was dying; and the frightful cause of all was, that little George Irwin, a favourite with everybody, had in some unaccountable manner fallen into the river Lca, and been drowned. This, at least, was the general

conviction, although the river had been dragged to no purpose—the poor child's black beaver-hat and feather having been discovered floated to the bank, a considerable way down the stream. The body, it was thought, had been carried out into the Thames by the force of the current.

A terrible suspicion glanced across my mind. "Where is Mr. Renshawe?" I asked. Nobody knew. He had not been seen since five o'clock—about the time, I soon ascertained, that the child was missed. I had the house cleared, as quickly as possible, of the numerous gossips that crowded it, and then sought a conference with Dr. Garland, who was with Mrs. Irwin. The distracted mother had, I found, been profusely bled and cupped, and it was hoped that brain-fever, which had been apprehended, would not ensue. The physician's suspicions pointed the same way as mine; but he declined committing himself to any advice, and I was left to act according to my own discretion. I was new to such matters at that time—unfortunately so, as it proved, or the affair might have had a less painful issue.

Tomlins and I remained up, waiting for the return of Mr. Renshawe; and as the long, slow hours limped past, the night-silence only broken by the dull moaning, and occasional spasmodic screams of poor Mrs. Irwin, I grew very much excited. The prolonged absence of Mr. Renshawe confirmed my impressions of his guilt, and I determined to tax him

with it, and take him into custody the instant he appeared. It was two in the morning before he did so; and the nervous fumbling for full ten minutes, with his latch-key, before he could open the door, quite prepared me for the spectral-like aspect he presented on entering. He had met somebody, it afterwards appeared, outside, who had assured him that the mother of the drowned child was either dead or dying. He never drank, I knew, but he staggered as if intoxicated; and after he had with difficulty reached the head of the stairs, in reply to my question as to where he had been, he could only stutter with white trembling lips: "It—it—cannot be—be true—that Lau—that Mrs. Irwin is—dying?"

"Quite true, Mr. Renshawe," I very imprudently replied, and in much too loud a tone, for we were but a few paces from Mrs. Irwin's bedroom door. "And if, as I suspect, the child has been drowned by you, you will have before long two murders on your head."

A choking, bubbling, noise came from the wretched man's throat, and his shaking fingers vainly strove to loosen his neck-tie. At the same moment, I heard a noise, as of struggling, in the bed-room, and the nurse's voice in eager remonstrance. I instantly made a movement towards Mr. Renshawe, with a view to loosen his cravat—his features being frightfully convulsed, and to get him out of the way as quickly as possible, for I guessed what was about to happen—when he, mistaking my intention, started back,

turned half round, and found himself confronted by Mrs. Irwin, her pale features and white night-dress dabbled with blood, in consequence of a partial disturbance of the bandages in struggling with the nurse—a terrifying, ghastly sight even to me; to him utterly overwhelming, and scarcely needing her frenzied execrations on the murderer of her child to deprive him utterly of all remaining sense and strength. He suddenly reeled, threw his arms wildly into the air, and before I could stretch forth my hand to save him, fell heavily backwards from the edge of the steep stairs, where he was standing, to the bottom. Tomlins and I hastened to his assistance, lifted him up, and as we did so, a jet of blood gushed from his mouth; he had likewise received a terrible wound near the right temple, from which the life-stream issued copiously.

We got him to bed: Dr. Garland and a neighbouring surgeon were soon with us, and prompt remedies were applied. It was a fruitless labour. Day had scarcely dawned before we heard from the physician's lips that life with him was swiftly ebbing to its close. He was perfectly conscious and collected. Happily there was no stain of murder on his soul: he had merely enticed the child away, and placed him, under an ingenious pretence, with an acquaintance at Camden-Town; and by this time both he and his mother were standing, awe-struck and weeping, by Henry Renshawe's death-bed. He had thrown

the child's hat into the river, and his motive in thus acting appeared to have been a double one. In the first place, because he thought the boy's likeness to his father was the chief obstacle to Mrs. Irwin's toleration of his addresses; and next, to bribe her into compliance by a promise to restore her son. But he could not be deemed accountable for his actions. "I think," he murmured brokenly, "that the delusion was partly self-cherished, or of the Evil One. I observed the likeness long before, but it was not till the—the husband was dying, that the idea fastened itself upon my aching brain, and grew there. But the world is passing: forgive me—Ellen—Laura"—He was dead!

The inquest on the cause of death returned, of course, that it was "accidental:" but I long regretted that I had not been less precipitate, though perhaps all was for the best—for the sufferer as well as others. Mr. Oxley had died some five weeks previously. This I found from Renshawe's will, where it was recited as a reason that, having no relative alive for whom he cared, his property was bequeathed to Guy's Hospital, charged with 100*l.* a-year to Ellen Irwin, as long as she lived unmarried. The document was perfectly coherent; and although written during the height of his monomania, contained not a word respecting the identity of the youthful widow and the Laura whose sad fate had first unsettled the testator's reason.

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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## THE PARTNER.

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I HAD virtually, though not formally, left the force, when a young man, of gentlemanly but somewhat dissipated aspect, and looking very pale and agitated, called upon me with a note from one of the commissioners, enjoining me to assist the bearer, Mr. Edmund Webster, to the utmost of my ability, if, upon examination, I saw reason to place reliance upon his statement relative to the painful and extraordinary circumstances in which he was involved.

“Mr. Edmund Webster,” I exclaimed, after glanc-

ing at the note. “ You are the person, then, accused of robbing Mr. Hutton, the corn-merchant (the reader will, of course, understand that I make use of fictitious names), and whom that gentleman refuses to prosecute ? ”

“ The same, Mr. Waters. But although the disgraceful charge, so far as regards legal pursuit, appears to be withdrawn, or rather is not pressed, I and my family shall not be the less shamed and ruined thereby, unless my perfect innocence can be made manifest before the world. It is with that view we have been advised to seek your assistance ; and my father desires me to say, that he will hesitate at no expense necessary for the thorough prosecution of the inquiry.”

“ Very well, Mr. Webster. The intimation of the commissioner is, however, of itself all-potent with me, although I hoped to be concerned in no more such investigations. Have the goodness, therefore, to sit down, and favour me minutely and distinctly with your version of the affair, omitting, if you please, no circumstance, however apparently trivial, in connection with it. I may tell you,” I added, opening the note-book from which I am now transcribing, and placing it before me in readiness to begin—“ I may tell you, by way of some slight encouragement, that the defence you volunteered at the police-office was, in my opinion, too improbable to be an invention ; and I, as you know, have had large experience in

such matters. That also, I suspect, is Mr. Hutton's opinion ; and hence not only his refusal to prosecute, but the expense and trouble he has been at, to my knowledge, in preventing either his own or your name from appearing in the papers. Now, sir, if you please."

" I shall relate every circumstance, Mr. Waters, as clearly and truthfully as possible, for my own sake, in order that you may not be working in the dark ; and first, I must beg your attention to one or two family matters, essential to a thorough appreciation of the position in which I am placed."

" Go on, sir : it is my duty to hear all you have to say."

" My father," proceeded Mr. Edmund Webster, " who, as you are aware, resides in the Regent's Park, retired about five years ago from the business in Mark Lane, which has since been carried on by the former junior partner, Mr. Hutton. Till within the last six months, I believed myself destined for the army, the purchase-money of a cornetcy having been lodged at the Horse Guards a few days after I came of age. Suddenly, however, my father changed his mind, insisted that I should become a partner of Hutton's in the corn-trade, and forthwith withdrew the money lodged for the commission. I am not even yet cognizant of all his motives for this seeming caprice ; but those he alleged were, first, my spendthrift, idle habits—an imputation for which, I confess, there was

too much foundation; though as to whether the discipline of the counting-house would, as he believed, effect a beneficial change, there might be two opinions. Another, and, I have no doubt, much more powerfully inducing motive with him was, that I had formed an attachment for Miss Ellen Bramston, the second daughter of Captain Bramston, of the East India Company's service, residing at Hampstead upon his half-pay. My father strongly disapproved of the proposed alliance: like most of the successful City men I have known or heard of, he more heartily despises poverty with a laced coat on its back than in rags; and he knew no more effectual plan could be hit upon for frustrating my wishes, than by transforming my expected cornetey into a partnership in the corn-trade, my imaginary sword into an actual goose-quill; Captain Bramston, who is distantly related to an earl, being even prouder than he is poor, and a man that would rather see his daughter in her coffin than married to a trader. ‘It was condescension enough,’ he angrily remarked, ‘that he had permitted Ellen Bramston to encourage the addresses of the son of a City parvenu, but it was utterly preposterous to suppose she could wed an actual corn-chandler.’”

“Corn-chandler!”

“That was Captain Bramston's pleasant phrase, when I informed him of my father's sudden change of purpose. The proposed partnership was as distaste

ful to myself as to Captain Bramston ; but my father proved inexorable--fiercely so, I may say—to my entreaties, and those of my sisters ; and I was placed in the dilemma, either of immediate banishment from home, and probable forfeiture of my inheritance, or the loss of Ellen Bramston, to whom, with all my follies, I was and am devotedly attached. After much anxious cogitation, I hit upon a scheme, requiring for a time the exercise of a considerable amount of deceit and dissimulation, which would, I flattered myself, ultimately reconcile interest with inclination—give me Ellen, and not lose my father.”

“ To which deceit and dissimulation you are doubtless indebted for your present unfortunate position.”

“ You have rightly anticipated. But to proceed. Mr. Hutton himself, I must tell you, was strongly adverse to receiving me as a partner, though for some reason or other he durst not openly oppose the project; his son, John Hutton, also bitterly objected to it.”—

“ His son, John Hutton ! I know the character of Hutton senior pretty well; pray what is that of his son ?”

“ Well, like myself, he is rather fast perhaps, but not the less a good sort of young fellow enough. He sailed the week before last for Riga, on business.”

“ Before you were apprehended ?”

“ On the morning of the same day. Let me see,

where was I? Oh—Mr. Hutton's aversion to the partnership, the knowledge of which suggested my plan of operation. I induced him to represent to my father that I should pass at least two or three months in the counting-house, before the matter was irreversibly concluded, for his, Mr. Hutton's sake, in order that it might be ascertained if there was any possibility of taming me into habits of method and application; and I hypocritically enforced his argument—you see I am perfectly candid—by promising ultimate dutiful submission to my father's wishes, provided the final decision were thus respite. The main object I thought to obtain by this apparent compliance was the effectual loosening, before many weeks had passed, of the old gentleman's purse-strings, which had of late been over-tightly drawn. I had several pressing debts of honour, as they are called—debts of dis-honour would, according to my experience, be the apter phrase—which it was absolutely necessary to discharge; and the success, moreover, of my matrimonial project entirely depended upon my ability to secure a very considerable sum of money."

"Your matrimonial project?"

"Yes: it was at last arranged, not without much reluctance on the part of Ellen, but I have good reason for believing with the covert approbation of Captain Bramston, that we should effect a stolen marriage, immediately set off for the continent, and remain there till the parental storm, which on my

father's part would I knew be tremendous, had blown over. I did not feel much disquieted as to the final result. I was an only son; my sisters would be indefatigable intercessors; and we all, consequently, were pretty confident that a general reconciliation, such as usually accompanies the ringing down of the green curtain at the wind-up of a stage-comedy, would, after no great interval of time, take place. Money, however, was indispensable—money for the wedding expenses, the flight to France, and living there for a considerable time perhaps; and no likelier mode of obtaining it occurred to me than that of cajoling my father into good-humour, by affecting to acquiesce in his wishes. And here I may remark, in passing, that had I been capable of the infamous deed I am accused of, abundant opportunities of plundering Mr. Hutton presented themselves from the first hour I entered his counting-house. Over and over again has he left me alone in his private room, with the keys in the lock of his iron safe, where large sums were frequently deposited, not in bank-notes only, but untraceable gold.'

"That looks like a singular want of caution in so precise and wary a man as Mr. Hutton," I remarked, half under my breath.

"Nothing of the sort," rejoined Mr. Edmund Webster with some heat, and his pallid face brightly flushing. "It only shows that, with all my faults and follies, it was impossible for any one that knew

me to imagine I could be capable of perpetrating a felony."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Webster; I meant nothing offensive to you: the remark was merely the partly involuntary expression of a thought which suddenly glanced across my mind."

"I have little more of preliminary detail to relate," he went on to say. "Contrary to our hope and expectation, my father became not a whit more liberal with his purse than before—the reverse rather; and I soon found that he intended to keep the screw on till the accomplishment of the hated partnership placed an insuperable **bar** between me and Ellen Bramston. I used to converse frequently upon these matters with Mr. Hutton, as unreservedly as I do now with you; and I must say that, although extremely anxious to avoid any appearance of opposition to my father, he always expressed the warmest sympathy with my aims and wishes; so much so, in fact, that I at last ventured to ask him for the loan of about five hundred pounds, that being the least sum which would enable me to pay off the most pressing of the claims by which I was harassed, and carry out my wedding project. That favour, however, he flatly refused, under the plea that his having done so would sooner or later come to my father's knowledge."

"And did Mr. Hutton, after that refusal, continue to afford you opportunities of helping yourself, had you been so minded?"

"Yes; unquestionably he did: but what of that?" sharply replied the young man, his pale face again suffused with an angry flush.

"Nothing, sir; nothing. Go on: I am all attention."

"Well, I made application to several money-lenders with the like ill success, till last Monday fortnight, when I was accosted at Mr. Hutton's place of business in the Corn-market, where I happened to be for a few minutes alone, by a respectable-looking middle-aged man, who asked me if I was the Mr. Edmund Webster who had left a note at Mr. Curtis's of Bishopsgate Street, on the previous Saturday, requesting the loan of five hundred pounds, upon my own acceptance at six months' date. I eagerly replied in the affirmative; upon which Mr. Brown, as the man called himself, asked if I had the promissory-note for five hundred and fifty pounds, as I had proposed, ready drawn; as if so, he would give me the cash at once. I answered in a flurry of joyous excitement, that I had not the note drawn nor a stamp with me, but if he would wait a few minutes till Mr. Hutton or a clerk came in, I would get one and write the acceptance immediately. He hesitated for a moment, and then said: 'I am in a hurry this morning, but I will wait for you in the coffee-room of the Bay-tree Tavern: have the kindness to be as quick as you can, and draw the note in favour of Mr. Brown.' He had not been gone above three or four minutes, when a

clerk came in. I instantly hurried to a stationer's, wrote the note in his shop, and speeded on with it to the Bay-tree Tavern. The coffee-room was full, except the box where sat Mr. Brown, who, after glancing at the acceptance, and putting it quickly up, placed a roll of notes in my hand. ‘Do not display your money,’ he said, ‘before all these people. You can count the notes under the table.’ I did so: they were quite correct—ten fifties; and I forthwith ordered a bottle of wine. Mr. Brown, however, alleging business as an excuse, did not wait till it was brought—bade me good-day, and disappeared, taking, in his hurry, my hat instead of his own.

“I was, you will readily believe, exceedingly jubilant at this lucky turn of affairs; and, strange as it must appear to you, and does now to myself, it did not strike me at the time as at all extraordinary or unbusinesslike, that I should have five hundred pounds suddenly placed in my hands by a man to whom I was personally unknown, and who could not, therefore, be certain that I was the Edmund Webster he professed to be in search of. What with the effect of the wine I drank and natural exultation, I was, I well remember, in a state of great excitement when I left the tavern, and hardly seemed to feel my feet as I hurried away to Mark Lane to inform Mr. Hutton of my good-luck, and bid his counting-house and the corn-trade a final farewell. He was not at home, and I went in and seated myself in

his private room to await his return. I have no doubt that, as the clerk has since deposed, I *did* look flustered, agitated; and it is quite true also, that, after vainly waiting for upwards of an hour, I suddenly left the place, and, as it happened, unnoticed by anybody. Immediately upon leaving Mark Lane I hastened to Hampstead, saw Miss Bramston; and as everything, with the exception of the money, had been for some time in readiness, it was soon decided that we should take wing at dawn on the following morning for Scotland, and thence pass over to France. I next betook myself to Regent's Park, where I dined, and confided everything to my sisters except as to *how* I had obtained the necessary funds. At about eight in the evening, I took a cab as far as the Haymarket for the purpose of hiring a post-chaise-and-four, and of paying a few debts of honour in that neighbourhood. I was personally unknown to the postmaster; it was therefore necessary to prepay the chaise as far as St. Alban's, and I presented him with one of the fifty-pound notes for that purpose. He did not appear surprised at the largeness of the sum, but requested me to place my name and address at the back of the note before he changed it. In my absurd anxiety to prevent the possibility of our flight being traced, I indorsed the note as 'Charles Hart, Great Wimpole Street,' and the man left the yard.

"He was gone a considerable time, and I was getting exceedingly impatient, when, to my surprise

and consternation, he re-entered the yard accompanied by a police-officer. ‘You are the gentleman from whom Mr. Evans received this fifty-pound note a few minutes ago—are you not?’ ‘Yes, to be sure,’ I answered, stammering and colouring, why I scarcely knew. ‘Then step this way, if you please,’ said the man. ‘That note, with nine others of the same value, is advertised in the evening papers as having been stolen from a gentleman’s counting-house in Mark Lane.’ I thought I should have fainted; and when a paragraph in the *Globe* was pointed out to me, offering a reward, on the part of Mr. Hutton, for the apprehension of the person or persons who had that day stolen ten fifty-pound Bank-of-England notes—the dates and numbers of which were given—from his office, I was so completely stunned, that but for the police-officer I should have dropped upon the floor. ‘This, perhaps, may be cleared up,’ said the officer, ‘so far as you, Mr. Hart, are concerned; and I will, if you like, go with you at once to your address in Great Wimpole Street.’ It was of course necessary to acknowledge that my name was not Hart, and that I had given a false address. This was enough. I was at once secured and taken off to the station-house, searched, and the other nine notes being found upon me, no doubt was entertained of my guilt. I obstinately declined giving my real name—very foolishly so, as I now perceive, since Mr. Hutton’s clerk, the moment he saw me the next day at the police-

court, disclosed it as a matter of course. The result you know. Mr. Hutton, when he heard *who* it was that had been taken into custody, kept resolutely out of the way; and, after several remands, I was set at liberty, the magistrate remarking, that he knew of no case which showed, in a more striking light, the need of a public prosecutor in this country. My account of the way in which I became possessed of the notes was, as you know, scouted, and quite naturally; Mr. Curtis, of Bishopsgate Street, having denied all knowledge of Mr. Brown, or that he had commissioned any one to present me with five hundred pounds in exchange for my acceptance. Thus stigmatised and disgraced, I returned home to find my father struck down, in what was at first thought would prove mortal illness, by the blow—Captain Bramston's door shut against me—and the settled marriage of my eldest sister, Jane, with an amiable young man, peremptorily broken off by his relatives, on account of the assumed criminality of her brother."

"This is indeed a sad, mysterious business, Mr. Webster," I remarked, when the young man had ceased speaking; "but pray tell me, did either Mr. Hutton or his son know of your application to Mr. Curtis?"

"I cannot say that either of them did, though it is more than probable that I mentioned it to both of them."

"Well, Mr. Webster, I have confidence in your veracity: but it is essential that I should see your father before engaging in this business."

"He is anxious you should do so, and as early as possible."

It was then arranged that I should call on Webster, senior, at three o'clock the same afternoon, and announce myself to the servants as Mr. Thompson. I was punctual to the time appointed, and was forthwith ushered by one of the daughters into her father's presence. He was not yet sufficiently recovered to leave his bed; and I had hardly exchanged half-a-dozen sentences with him, when the same young lady by whom I had been introduced hastily returned to say Mr. Hutton was below, and requested an immediate interview. Mr. Webster bade his daughter tell Mr. Hutton he was engaged, and could not be interrupted; and she was turning away to do so, when I said hastily, "Excuse me, Mr. Webster, but I should exceedingly like to hear, with my own ears, what Mr. Hutton has to say, unobserved by him."

"You may do so with all my heart," he replied; "but how shall we manage to conceal you?"

"Easily enough--under the bed;" and suiting the action to the word, I was in a moment out of sight. Miss Webster was then told to ask Mr. Hutton to walk up, and in a few minutes that worthy gentleman entered the room. After a few hypocritical condolences upon the invalid's state of health, Mr.

Hutton came to the point at once, and with a vengeance.

"I am come, Mr. Webster," he began in a determined tone, "to say that I will endure this shilly-shallying no longer. Either you give up the bonds you hold of mine, for borrowed moneys"—

"Eleven thousand pounds and upwards!" groaned the sick man.

"About that sum, I am aware, including interest; in discharge of which load of debt I was, you know, to have given a third share of my business to your admirable son. Well, agree at once to cancel those bonds, or I forthwith prosecute your son, who will as certainly be convicted, and transported for life."

"I tell you again," retorted the excited invalid, "that I will not purchase mere forbearance to prosecute at the cost of a single shilling. The accusation would always be hanging over his head, and we should remain for ever disgraced, as we are now, in the eyes of the world."

"I have turned that over in my mind," replied Hutton, "and I think I can meet your wishes. Undertake to cancel the debt I owe you, and I will wait publicly to-morrow upon the magistrate with a letter in my hand purporting to be from my son, and stating that it was he who took the notes from my desk, and employed a man of the name of Brown to exchange them for your son's acceptance, he being anxious that Mr. Edmund Webster should not become

his father's partner; a purpose that would necessarily be frustrated if he, Edmund Webster, was enabled to marry and leave this country."

There was no answer to this audacious proposal for a minute or two, and then Mr. Webster said slowly, "That my son is innocent, I am thoroughly convinced"—

"Innocent!" exclaimed Mr. Hutton, with savage derision. "Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Still," continued the invalid, unmindful of the interruption, "it might be impossible to prove him so; and your proposition has a certain plausibility about it. I must, however, have time to consider of it."

"Certainly; let us say till this day week. You cannot choose but comply; for if you do not, as certainly as I stand here a living man, your son shall, immediately after the expiration of that time, be on the high road to the hulks." Having said this, Mr. Hutton went away, and I emerged from my very undignified lurking-place.

"I begin to see a little clearer through this black affair," I said in reply to the old gentleman's questioning look; "and I trust that we may yet be able to turn the tables upon the very confident gentleman who has just left us. Now, if you please," I added, addressing Miss Webster, who had again returned, "I shall be glad of a few moments' conversation with your brother." She led the way down stairs, and I

found Mr. Edmund Webster in the dining-room. "Have the kindness," I said, "to let me see the hat Mr. Brown left behind at the tavern in exchange for yours." The young man seemed surprised at the apparent oddness of the request, but immediately complied with it. "And pray what maker or seller's name was pasted inside the crown of *your* hat, Mr. Webster?"

"Lewis, of Bond Street," he replied; "I always purchase my hats there."

"Very good. And now as to Mr. Brown's personal appearance. What is he at all like?"

"A stoutish middle-aged man, with very light hair, prominent nose, and a pale face, considerably pock-marked."

"That will do for the present, Mr. Webster; and let me beg, that till you see me again, not a soul receives a hint that we are moving in this business."

I then left the house. The hat had furnished an important piece of information, the printed label inside being, "Perkins, Guildford, Surrey!" and at the Rose and Crown Inn, Guildford, Surrey, I alighted the very next day at about two o'clock, in the strong hope of meeting in its steep streets or adjacent lanes with a stoutish gentleman, distinguished by very light hair, a long nose, and a white pock-marked face. The chance was, at all events, worth a trial; and I very diligently set to work to realise it, by walking about from dawn till dark, peering at

every head I passed, and spending the evenings in the most frequented parlours of the town. Many a bootless chase I was led by a distant glimpse of light or red hair; and one fellow with a sandy poll, and a pair of the longest legs I ever saw, kept me almost at a run for two mortal hours one sultry hot morning, on the road to Chertsey, before I headed him, and confronted a pair of fat cheeks, as round and red as an apple, between which lay, scarcely visible, a short snub-nose. Patience and perseverance at length, however, met with their reward. I recognised my man as he was cheapening a piece of meat in the market-place. He answered precisely to the description given me, and wore, moreover, a fashionable hat, strongly suggestive of Bond Street. After awhile he parted from his wife, and made towards a public-house, into the parlour of which I entered close after him. I had now leisure to observe him more closely. He appeared to be a respectable sort of man, but a care-worn expression flitted at times over his face, which to me, an adept in such signs, indicated with sufficient plainness much anxiety of mind, arising, probably, from pecuniary embarrassment, not, I judged, from a burdened conscience. I presently obtained further and decisive proof, though that was scarcely needed, that Mr. Skinner, as the waiter called him, was my Mr. Brown: in rising to leave the room, I took his hat, which he had hung up, in apparent

mistake for my own, and in the half-minute that elapsed before I replaced it, saw plainly enough, "Lewis, Bond Street, London," on the inside label. The only question now was, how to best avail myself of the lucky turning up of Mr. Brown; and whilst I was meditating several modes of action, the sight of a board, upon which was painted, "This ground to be let on Building Leases: Apply to Mr. Skinner, Builder," at once decided me. I called upon Mr Skinner, who lived about half a mile out of Guildford, the next morning, inquired as to the conditions of the said leases, walked with him over the ground in question, calculated together how much a handsome country-house would cost, and finally adjourned to the Rose and Crown to discuss the matter further over a bottle of wine. Skinner was as free a soul, I found, as ever liquor betrayed into indiscretion: and I soon heard that he had lately been to London, and had a rich brother-in-law there of the name of Hutton, with other less interesting particulars. This charming confidence, he seemed to think, required a return in kind, and after he had essayed half-a-dozen indirect questions, I came frankly out with, "There's no occasion to beat about the bush, Mr. Skinner: you wish to know who I am, and especially if I am able to pay for the fine house we have been talking of. Well, then, I am a money-dealer; I lend cash, sometimes, on security."

"A pawnbroker?" queried Mr. Skinner, doubtfully.

"Not exactly that: I oftener take persons in pledge than goods. What I mean by money-dealer, is a man who discounts the signatures of fast men with good expectations, who don't mind paying handsomely in the end for present accommodation."

"I understand: a bill-discounter?"

"Precisely. But come, drink, and pass the decanter."

A gleam that shot out of the man's gray eyes strengthened a hope that I had hardly dared entertain, that I was on the eve of a great success; but the trout, it was clear, required to be cautiously played. Mr. Skinner presently fell into a brown study which I did not interrupt, contenting myself with refilling his glass as fast as he mechanically emptied it. "A bill-discounter," said he at last, putting down his pipe, and turning towards me with a settled purpose in his look. "Is amount and length of time to run of any consequence?"

"None whatever, if the parties are safe."

"Cash down on the nail?"

"Cash down on the nail, *minus*, of course, the interest."

"Of course. Well, then, Mr. Thompson, I have a promissory-note signed by Mr. Edmund Webster of London, for five hundred and fifty pounds, at six months' date, which I should like to discount."

"Webster of the Minories?"

"No; his father is a retired corn-merchant, resid-

ing in the Regent's Park. The bill's as safe as a Bank-of-England note."

"I know the party. But why doesn't the rich brother-in law you spoke of cash it for you?"

"Well," replied Skinner, "no doubt he would; but the fact is, there is a dispute between us about this very note. I owe him a goodish bit of money; and if he got it into his hands, he'd of course be for deducting the amount; and I've been obliged to put him off by pretending it was accidentally burned soon after I obtained it."

"A queer story, my friend; but if the signature's genuine, I don't mind that, and you shall have the cash at once."

"Here it is, then," said Skinner, unclasping a stout leather pocket-book. "I don't mind throwing back the odd fifty pounds."

I eagerly grasped the precious document, glanced at it, saw it was all right, placed it in my pocket, and then suddenly changing my tone, and rising from the table, said: "Now then, Skinner, *alias* Brown, I have to inform you that I am a detective police-officer, and that you are my prisoner."

"Police! prisoner!" shouted the astounded man, as he leaped to his feet: "what are you talking of?"

"I will tell you. Your brother-in-law employed you to discount the note now in my possession. You did so, pretending to be a Mr. Brown, the agent of a Mr. Curtis; but the villainous sequel of the transac-

tion—the charging young Mr. Webster with having stolen the very fifty-pound notes you gave him in the coffee-room of the Bay-tree Tavern—I do not believe, thanks to Master Hutton's success in suppressing the names in the public reports, you can be aware of."

The bewildered man shook as with ague in every limb, and when I ceased speaking, protested earnestly that he had had no evil design in complying with his brother-in-law's wishes.

"I am willing to think so," I replied; "but, at all events, you must go with me to London—quietly were best."

To this he, at last, though very reluctantly, consented; and half an hour afterwards we were in the train, and on our road to London.

The next morning, Mr. Webster's solicitors applied to Mr. Hutton for the immediate liquidation of the bonds held by their client. This, as we had calculated, rendered him furious; and Edmund Webster was again arrested on the former charge, and taken to the Marlborough Street Police-office, where his father, Captain Bramston, and other friends, impatiently awaited his appearance. Mr. Hutton this time appeared as prosecutor, and deposed to the safe custody of the notes on the morning of the robbery.

"And you swear," said Mr. Webster's solicitor, "that you did not with your own hands give the pretendedly stolen notes to Brown, and request him to take them in Mr. Curtis's name to young Mr. Webster?"

Hutton, greatly startled, glanced keenly in the questioner's face, and did not immediately answer. "No, I did not," he at last replied in a low, shaking voice.

"Let me refresh your memory. Did you not say to Brown, or rather Skinner, your brother-in-law"—

A slight scream escaped the quivering lips of the detected conspirator, and a blaze of frenzied anguish and alarm swept over his countenance, leaving it as white as marble. No further answer could be obtained from him; and as soon as possible he left the office, followed by the groans and hisses of the excited auditory. Skinner was then brought forward: he made a full and ample confession, and Edmund Webster was at once discharged, amidst the warm felicitations of the magistrate and the uproarious gratulations of his friends. It was intended to indict Mr. Hutton for perjury; but the unhappy man chose to appear before a higher tribunal than that of the Old Bailey. He was found dead in his bedroom early the next morning. His affairs were found to be in a state of insolvency, though the deficit was not large; 15s. in the pound having been, I understood, ultimately paid to the creditors. Miss Ellen Bramston, I must not in conclusion omit to state, became Mrs. Edmund Webster shortly after the triumphant vindication of her lover's character; and, I believe, Miss Webster was made a wife on the same day.

# Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer.

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## THE CONSPIRACY.

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THE repudiated or unacknowledged claims upon the British Government, some of them for fabulous sums, amount to a respectable national debt, and scores of individuals fall into poverty and untimely graves, in vain pursuit of a glittering bubble, ever dancing before their eyes, and ever just—only just—beyond their reach. The advent of a new First Lord of the Treasury, is the signal of a general revival from uneasy slumber of demands, which, shamefully ignored or neglected by his predecessor in office, will, write the unteachable solicitors, ‘be sure to meet with due appreciation from the distinguished states-

man, to whom the favour of a gracious sovereign, and the suffrages of an enlightened people have intrusted the honour and interests of the great British nation—which honour and interests can never be more effectually promoted than by doing justice to the meanest alike with the mightiest of that sovereign's subjects.” It is surprising, too, or at least it would be surprising to those who do not from experience know how slight a thread of coloured cob-web will retain persons otherwise sane in the consuming idleness, gradually changing to equally idle despair, of the fool's paradise of visionary hope,—to observe upon how slight and fanciful a foundation they continue to erect their air-drawn castles. I once knew a mathematician, of all men in the world, whom the following merely formal note uplifted to the seventh heaven from out the slough of despond into which he was fast sinking with some hope on his friends' part that he would at last touch the bottom, and rebound therefrom by his own latent energy into the clear and healthful atmosphere of genuine working-day life:—

“Whitehall,

“I am directed by Lord Melbourne to acknowledge the receipt of your memorial and accompanying vouchers, and to state that the matter shall receive his earliest attention.”

In less than six months afterwards the mathematician was a confirmed lunatic! Since I left

the police force, I have been more familiar with these hallucinations, and it happened that once whilst therein, I was brought, in the exercise of my vocation, in contact with one of the most importunate, inexorcisable of the “ghosts” by which the halls and passages of the Treasury and other public offices are constantly haunted; an intimacy which, it will be seen, led to curious revelations and results.

This person, one Alexander Tyrell, was about thirty years of age, and had inherited, two or three years before I made official acquaintance with him, about eight hundred pounds in cash, and a claim upon the English Treasury for the same number of thousands, from his father, which, claim as far as I could or cared to understand the bill of particulars —set forth in the bundle of documents exteriorly known, at all events, to every clerk and messenger at the Treasury, and by them facetiously denominated “The Kelp Papers,” was for losses sustained by Tyrell, senior, a manufacturer of kelp from sea-weed, on the coast of Kent, who, at the suggestion or command of Sir John Moore, during the alarm previous to Trafalgar of French invasion, gave up his premises, buildings, &c., for the use and occupation of the troops assembled there; incurring thereby the destruction of an immense quantity of partially-prepared kelp, and the ruin of his business. Tyrell’s father died in 1830, just as he was more sanguine of success than he had at any time been during the

previous five-and-twenty years, in consequence of Earl Grey's succession to office, and the bequest of a thousand pounds, by a distant relative, enabling him to press the siege at the Treasury with greater vigour than ever. Death, albeit, always unwelcome, and never more so than when the hand grasps, or its owner fancies it is about to grasp, the prize of a life's exertion, suddenly interposed at the critical moment, his coming having probably been hastened, by the agitation into which the change of ministry and the unanticipated legacy threw the old man's care-cankered mind and body; and his only son, Alexander, found himself, after his father's debts and funeral charges had been paid, in possession of eight hundred pounds in money, and a bill for eight thousand, drawn upon but not accepted by the British Government. Now Alexander Tyrell was a young man of compressed but naturally elastic genius, who, thus suddenly liberated from parental control and the much sterner gripe of poverty, forthwith expanded into a swell of first-rate brilliancy; and carried on the war with such spirit, that at the end of less than two years, he found, upon a rough calculation, hurriedly gone into, after awakening one morning in the custody of a sheriff's officer, that he was worth about twenty pounds in cash, after relieving himself of the said officer, wherewith to face about two thousand pounds of debt! Thus beset, Alexander Tyrell bethought himself of his important

claim upon the National Exchequer ; and the Treasury clerks, who had congratulated themselves upon the death of " Old Kelp," were surprised and disgusted by the apparition of Kelp the younger, who moreover quickly manifested a combative persistence in his purpose, which the rudest rebuff, the most supercilious insolence, utterly failed to repress or mitigate. More than that, the obstinate claimant of eight thousand pounds, which he assured them " was a vital necessity of his cruel and unexampled position," began at last to assume, concurrently with the cultivation of his moustaches, an air of occult menace, darkly interpreted by warning hints at the risks incurred by official personages, who systematically perverted or dammed up the fountain of justice. Matter for merriment this to any one moderately skilled in physiognomy that had once seen his good-looking, good-humoured, knavish face, wherein braggart was written plainly enough, but of courage, moral or physical, not the faintest sign. Whether, however, from fear or fussiness, one of the officials, choosing to treat the affair seriously, had Alexander Tyrell taken before a magistrate, by whom he was bound over to keep the peace towards all the king's lieges, and notably the British Government and its employés, an undertaking which the terrified young man gave with a firm resolution, I am quite sure, not to break it. He was not, however, forbidden to strut solemnly past the office doors, as

the clerks were arriving or leaving, and glare at them with all the Byronic-satanism he could force into his weak light-hazel eyes—a pastime which, in conjunction with a continuous succession of anonymous letters, written in a woman's hand, but it was not doubted dictated by him, and addressed to the Lords and Secretary of the Treasury, caused an intimation to be given to the authorities of Scotland Yard, that it would be well to keep a sharp eye upon Alexander Tyrell's movements, and the more heedfully, that it was reported he had connected himself with the Chartist politicians who were agitating the country. I was selected for this service, and of course entered upon it at once, though with no great alacrity, till my zeal was quickened by a glimpse of circumstances, pointing to more serious issues than swaggering Alexander Tyrell's imaginary murderous or treasonable designs. True, he occasionally attended the meetings in John Street, but more from complaisance towards his sworn friend David Closs, managing clerk in a city attorney's office, and enthusiastic champion of the five points, than from any pleasure or interest he himself took in Chartist oratory, wildly as he cheered every denunciation of government villany and oppression. The sad truth was, that the deposition of the ministry and transference of the Treasury to the friendly gentlemen that dispensed their liberal eloquence from the John Street platform, would, taking the most sanguine

calculation, be brought about too late for him ; for so pressing were his needs, that delay was destruction —ruin ! His experience in furnished lodgings had been, I found, during the last twelvemonths, large and various, and in so swiftly a descending scale that his present domicile was a back attic in Great Windmill Street, which moreover his landlady had given him peremptory notice to quit, lest peradventure her sheets and blankets should go the three-golden-balls way of her lodger's last shirt. Thus desperately circumstanced, Alexander Tyrell may be forgiven, sworn though he had, eternal enmity to the vile British Government, for presenting himself at the Albany Barracks, and intimating his willingness to enlist in the Guards. Being very young-looking for his age, and standing nearly six feet in his stockings, he was provisionally accepted, received earnest of the king's bounty, and my surveillance of the gentleman's movements was, I imagined, at an end. I was mistaken : it was about to seriously begin. A still young, and no question very handsome woman, before her fresh, country complexion—she was from Christchurch, Hampshire—and bright, girlish eyes had been grimed, quenched by constant daily and nightly toil in a wholesale millinery manufactory, and other beauty-marring agencies, presented herself at the barracks in a state of semi-distractedness and informed the commanding officer that Tyrell was in his thirty-second year, and bound by a

solemn engagement—sealed by a fatal pledge, to marry her directly he received the first instalment of the money due to him from the Government. She gave the name of Lydia Lockwood; and it being known that I took especial interest in the new recruit, I was commissioned to ascertain the truth or falsehood of her story. It was true enough, poor girl! She loved the fellow with the devoted apprehensiveness with which a solitary woman cast into the engulfing whirlpool of London-labour life attaches herself to a man who from motives of real or simulated affection promises to lift her up from those gloomy depths to the peace and sunshine of a cheerful home. Her faith, too, in his honesty of purpose towards herself, was but momently shaken by his attempt at enlistment, and she unhesitatingly sold her scanty furniture to a broker in order to raise the smart-money required, she was told, to insure Tyrell's discharge. This she offered him; but, much to my surprise, when a few days afterwards I chanced to hear of the circumstance—and I should suppose to hers also—he declined receiving it, the commanding officer having, he informed her, determined, in consequence of her representations, to cancel his provisional engagement without charge. Money, however, it was soon apparent he must have somewhere obtained, and to a large amount, inasmuch, that he and his now inseparable crony David Closs, who had moreover suddenly lost his situation,

forthwith entered upon a course of riotous living; that Tyrell himself dressed again as in his buckish days, and presented Lydia Lockwood with the means of making quite a fashionable appearance! A riddle to read this, especially as Closs was indebted to his employer when discharged,—had been *therefore* discharged, and only saved from appearing at a police office by compassion for his wife and family. The attorney, Mr. B——, apprised of the dashing style of life assumed by his late clerk, bethought him that he might not have discovered the whole extent of that person's defalcations, and a more rigorous investigation was gone into, without, however, producing any enlightening result, and the mystery but for an accident might have remained unsolved. The two friends, who had been indulging with their usual freedom at the Wrekin tavern, got into a brawl with some of their boon associates, when going home, which ended in a fight, and a night's lodging at a police station. There, as the custom is, they were searched, and a note was found in Tyrell's pocket, a copy of which I was in possession of early the next morning. It was from Closs, and had been received early the previous day: I transcribe it verbatim :—

“ Dear Tyl:—If there is much more of Lydia Lockwood spooneyness, we shall both of us have a capital chance of finding ourselves double-ironed in Newgate. That's a fact. That vulture Levy, was

waiting for me when I got home last night, and an infernal jobation he gave me. He swears we obtained his three hundred pounds by false pretences, and that if the bill is not paid on the day it falls due, and it wants but about three weeks till then, he will give us both into custody forthwith. A pleasant prospect, eh? What with the drink I was full of, and the old villain's brutal threats and abuse, my head so aches and throbs that I can scarcely lift it from the pillow to scribble this note. I shall, however, be at the Wrekin to-night, when I hope to hear that you have made up your mind to go in and win. By —, it's enough to make one's hair stand on end to find that dread of a wench's tears and tongue stands between a sensible man and twenty thousand pounds! If that young feather-headed fool did not know me personally, I myself would run the risk of transportation to clutch such a prize, whilst you, lucky dog that you are in not being tied up,—not at least by a legal halter,—run no risk whatever. There must, mind you, be no more shilly-shallying: Newgate or twenty thousand pounds is about the size of it, and a fellow must have a queer sort of nut on his shoulders that in such a case hesitates for choice. We 'll have a roaring jollification to-night, and to-morrow or next day, you must be off, per mail, to Bristol.

“Yours faithfully,

“D. C.”

Closs and Tyrell were discharged upon payment of a fine; and neither appeared to suspect that the strictly "private and confidential" note had been looked into; or perhaps Tyrell had not told his crafty friend that he had it about him. However that might have been, I was instructed to accompany Tyrell to Bristol, and take a hand at the game by which the confederates proposed to transfer 20,000*l* from some other person's possession to their own. The "vulture Levy's" case and grievance were easily fathomed. Closs, whom Levy knew as B——'s managing clerk, had introduced Tyrell to the usurer as a person who was entitled to, and would shortly receive, a large amount of money from the Treasury, but who, meantime, was in pressing want of 300*l.*, which representation had induced Levy to advance the required sum upon Tyrell's note for 400*l.* With, however, that rogue-rob-rogue affair, I had not to concern myself; neither, to confess the truth, did I set about that which was confided to me in very dexterous fashion. Tyrell, whose handsome, well-stocked portmanteau bore a plate upon which was engraved "Alexander Champneys Tyrell, Esq., Hill Street, Berkeley Square," secured an inside place to Bristol by the night coach instead of the mail, and I, finding that the said passenger-coach was then full inside and out, and that the faster mail would reach Bristol full an hour before the coach, determined, after first seeing Tyrell off, to travel by mail. I did

so, and was in punctual though covert attendance when the night-coach reached that city ; but, to my chagrin and dismay, *without* Alexander Champneys Tyrell, Esquire, who, for some reason, unguessed of by me, had alighted at Swindon, where, one of the passengers, from some remarks and inquiries he had made, thought he intended remaining for some time. Very strange that Tyrell, intending to go no farther than Swindon, should pay his fare, as he had done, to Bristol ; and was his halting there a trick or an after-thought ? Did he, perchance, know and recognise me whilst watching him off from the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly, and in consequence, thus double, as it were, to throw me off the scent ? I could hardly believe that could be the case, so careful had I been to keep well in shadow during the whole time I had been upon his track ; but whether so or not, it was essential to lose no time in again striking the trail ; and by eleven o'clock in the forenoon of the same day, I was in Swindon, then a quiet country village, where I learned from the landlord of the Swan Inn, that a gentleman answering to the description I gave had breakfasted there, and directly afterwards hired a post-chaise, which had taken him about eight miles on the Warminster Road, to the Black Horse, a road-side public-house, where he had alighted and discharged the chaise. In something less than three hours I reached the Black Horse, on foot, not to attract notice or inquiry, and found

myself again too late and completely at fault. A gentleman from London had been there, hired a lad to show him where the Bennetts lived, been absent something over two hours, and, soon after returning to the Black Horse, had hailed a return Bath post-chaise that happened to pass, and set off therein for that city. I further ascertained that John Bennett was a farmer and widower in middling circumstances, who had two grown-up daughters living with him, one a comely young woman that folk said would shortly be the wife of William Rowcliffe, a native of that part of Wiltshire, but who for some time past had been living with his mother at Bristol. It was on my tongue to ask if there was any talk of a fortune having been left to the comely young woman or her sister; but I restrained myself, and, being too much knocked up to think of journeying further that day, I determined upon inventing some excuse for calling personally upon John Bennett before following Tyrell to Bath. I accordingly waited early the next morning upon Mr. Bennett—a sour, hard-grained, wiry fellow, and about as great a niggard of his words as he was by reputation of his money. “No; I have no old wheat to sell, nor barley either. The gentleman that called yesterday was *not* a buyer, and therefore cannot have forestalled you. Yes, that young woman is my daughter. As to handsome, why, handsome is as handsome does; and as that seems all you have to say, I have something else to do than stand gossiping

here ;" and so saying, the curmudgeon slammed the door—which he held in his hand whilst we were speaking—in my face.

A practised reader of the meanings of men does not, fortunately, depend altogether upon speech for their accurate interpretation ; and the brief perusal I had obtained of the faces of Mr. Bennett and Clara Bennett was not without its value. Both father and daughter—I saw only the elder of the two sisters—were much and pleasurable, yet anxiously excited. This the man's dilated, glittering glance, and his nervous clutch of the door-handle, resembling that of one suffering from the reaction of a previous night's debauch—the varying complexion of the young woman as she gazed at me with intense suspicious scrutiny—now bright and glowing, now shadowy and pale as stone but for the hectic spots that lent a fire they needed not to her piercing black eyes plainly testified ; whilst that the previous day's visitor was in some way connected therewith required no further proof than Alexander Champneys Tyrell's fashionable card, held in her fidgeting, restless fingers. Neither could I doubt that Tyrell suspected or feared that a police-agent was at his heels—a fear suggested by the possibility which might have occurred to him that David Closs's confidential note had passed under "detective" scrutiny ; and that my visit, the visit of any questioning stranger, had been in consequence adroitly provided against ; though in what light his

ingenuity had placed the probability or possibility of such a visit, or the purposes and character of the visitor, I of course could form no conjecture.

Further inquiry having elicited nothing in respect of the Bennetts towards enlightening me as to Tyrell's object in turning out of his way, as it seemed he had done, to have some half hour's conference with them, I hired a gig, and followed the quarry to Bath. There no tidings of the gentleman could be obtained, and I went on to Bristol, where, for a time, the same ill-fortune attended me. Tyrell could neither be seen or heard of; no one that I questioned knew either a Mrs. Rowcliffe or her son, and I was mentally debating the expediency of inserting an advertisement in the local papers to the effect that a person of that name, formerly resident in the neighbourhood of Swindon, Wiltshire, might, by sending her address to Richard Sampson, Esq., 16 Wine Street, hear of something to her advantage. This, however, was so every-day, transparent a ruse that, supposing the Rowcliffes to be connected with the enterprise in which Tyrell was engaged—which, after all, was a wild surmise of mine, for which I could have given no intelligible reason—could hardly fail of being seen through and defeated by a man whom the consciousness of a guilty purpose would render especially keen-sighted in the detection of such very common man-traps; and I was still undecided, when fortune or accident remedied the mis-

chance, that had so long, reckoning by my impatience, separated Tyrell and myself from each other. I met him one afternoon about three o'clock in Redcliffe Street, and so sudden and unexpected was the *rencontre* that I could not help starting and changing colour as my eyes met his—a want of presence of mind which, however, convinced me of what I had been in some doubt of, namely, that I was personally unknown to the fashionably-attired gentleman whose stare and simper, as in condescendent reply to my respectful question he assured me I was mistaken in supposing him to be Captain Augustus Fancourt, of the —— regiment then quartered in Bristol—were delightfully pleasant and refreshing. He was accompanied by a young, vulgar coxcomb, very sprucely attired, and displaying in his strutting gait and pretentious manner, a consequence as new and ill-fitting as his fine, ready-made clothes. They were on their way to the coach-office, which they reached just in time to secure two outside places by the morrow's day-coach to London. Those were the only vacant seats; but determined not to again lose sight of my slippery customer, I managed to make a private arrangement with the coachman, who, for a consideration, agreed to take me up at some distance on the road, and run the chance of an information against the proprietors of the 'Eclipse' for carrying more than the stipulated ten outsiders, a venture which, fortunately for the tentative mission in which I was engaged, he, on

that particular day, indulged in somewhat to excess. At the place where I was directed to await the coach I found a youngish, decently-dressed working-man, John Fentum by name, bound for London by the same conveyance; and, under favour of a similar bargain to mine, though entered into by him from an economical motive. The ‘Eclipse’ soon made its appearance, and its driver at length yielding to our importunity, agreed to give us a lift as far as Bath. Room was made for me in front, immediately behind the coachman, and by the side of Tyrell and his youthful friend—a remarkably wordy young blade, I should say, at all times, but more abundantly so than usual it appeared on that occasion, and after the passing away of a flush of angry vexation, excited, or I deceived myself, by the unexpected and unwelcome sight of Fentum, who had quickly climbed up to the dickey; his natural eloquence being stimulated by an unusual flow of spirits, the exhilarating fineness of the day, and the flattering smiles of a pretty and prodigiously genteel young woman on the box-seat. After the fashion of malapert youth he was equally conversant with all topics; talked of the Carlist War of Succession, then raging in the Peninsula, with Tyrell—an indirect recognition of that gentleman’s military moustaches; to me, but loftily, with patronising condescendence, of the new reformed House of Commons, which he pronounced to be a despicable failure; and to the damsel on the box seat of James’

or Bulwer's last novel ; the whole profusely interspersed with hints, quite as interesting to me as they could be to the said damsels, charmingly conscious as she did her best to look, that the young gentleman, whom a whim and the genial weather had, for once, induced to travel on the outside of a stage-coach, had lately come into possession of a large fortune. Not unamusing all that, and might be instructive, the more probably that Tyrell anxiously strove to confine his protégé's eloquence to national themes ; at last with success, and the inflated young man, seizing the favourable opportunity afforded by the coach passing over a track of greensward, burst out with a flaming apostrophe to ' Glory and Greece ! The Sword, the Banner, and the Field !' *à propos* of what I do not remember ; but if not quite intelligible it was very sonorous, and the admiring silence which followed its delivery remained unbroken, till a voice from the dickey called out " Billy, I say, Billy !" each " Billy" emphasised by a poke in the small of the confounded elocutionist's back with the point of John Fentum's umbrella ; which person, stretching himself over the roof of the coach, claimed acquaintance in that very disgusting fashion with the suddenly extinguished orator, whose face, flaming with shame and rage, was, however, kept determinedly in the direction of the spires of Bath spite of his remorseless tormentor's persistent iteration of " Billy," presently amplified into " I say, Billy, your mother served me

a pretty trick this morning : fobbed me off with two stale buns at the price of new ones : a shameful imposition, I call it!" uttered in so ludicrous a tone that every soul on the coach—the victim, of course, excepted—burst at once into explosions of laughter, which were only repressed by the tact of the coachman, who, anything but desirous, under the circumstances, of irritating a legitimate passenger, or permitting others to do so, caused his leaders to suddenly prance and curvet after a fashion that instantly checked the general mirth ; and when the alarm had subsided it was time for me and Fentum, in accordance with our understanding with the coachman—Bath being less than half a mile distant—to descend from the roof of the ' Eclipse,' and not attempt to resume our places till at about the same distance on the other side of that city.

" Who is that chattering puppy whose comb you cut so cleverly ? " I asked Fentum, as we trudged on after the coach.

" Who is he ? Why, William Rowcliffe, whose mother keeps a bread-and-bun-shop in Broadmead, and a friendly chap, too, till the fortune they say he's come to sent his brains a ballooning. He cocked up his nose, and pretended not to know Jack Fentum, when I met him yesterday with his grand friend ; but I have paid him quite twenty shillings in the pound upon that score. As to his mother, she's a very decent, good sort of woman : and it's all chaff. mind you, about the stale buns."

"I supposed so. By-the-way, is that swell in moustaches the grand friend you speak of?"

"Yes: he's a Government man, and brought down the news of William Rowcliffe's fortune."

"A Government man, is he? What kind of a Government man?"

"Ah, there you nonplush me. I only know that Mrs. Rowcliffe told me herself that she had seen letters with 'On His Majesty's Service' printed on the outside, directed to him, and signed by Prime Ministers. He's a first-rate nob, depend upon it, and I wish now that I had not curry-combed young Rowcliffe's tender hide quite so roughly."

"It might have been as well, perhaps, not to have done so. Are you sure of work when you reach London?"

"Very far from sure, worse luck."

"Where shall you hang out till you do? Perhaps I could recommend you to cheaper lodgings."

"It ain't likely, Mister, that you could, seeing that I shall take up with my married sister, at No. 9 Rupert Street, Haymarket. That is the West End, is it not?"

"Well, perhaps so, considering it is neither the east, south, or north end. Is Mrs. Rowcliffe, the widow, a marrying woman, think you?"

"A marrying woman! O, I say, Mister, you are a squinting round that corner, are you? But it's no go, my friend; Mrs. Rowcliffe's a widow bewitched,

though she don't advertise herself in that capacity, and folk generally don't care to talk about it."

"A widow bewitched!"

"Yes; meaning thereby that her husband is gone abroad upon Government account, for having once upon a time forgot to sign his right name. But so much talk, do you know, Mister Londoner, makes my throat feel uncommon dry."

"No doubt it must do so; and here, luckily, is the 'Ring of Bells,' where we can moisten it."

I left Fentum in the enjoyment of that agreeable pastime, and walked quickly to the inn, where the 'Eclipse' changed horses, and the passengers were permitted to snatch a hasty breakfast, which, on that morning, was partaken of by John Bennett and his daughter Clara, both in gala dress, and the young woman—girl, rather—who seemed to be in fragile health, all smiles and blushes. They were of course there by appointment, and I noticed that Alexander Champneys Tyrell, was superabundantly gracious towards both father and daughter; whilst the ostensible lover, Rowcliffe, looked glum and uneasy, as wishing to be gone rather than prolong or dally with the flying moments. The criterion by which I judged was, however, a very imperfect one, being merely the reflection of their faces and gestures in the large chimney-glass of the breakfast-room, obliquely visible from the slightly opened folding-door through which, being, of course, anxious that

neither Bennett nor his daughter should glimpse their late visitor, I furtively peeped at the party whose conversation, amidst the clatter of knives and forks, was unintelligible, though not so entirely so but that I gladly comprehended Bennett and his daughter had no intention of accompanying their friends to town. I remained but a few minutes in observation; and, hastening off, was overtaken in due time by the coach, and at about seven o'clock the same evening I saw Alexander Champneys Tyrell, Esq., and William Rowcliffe, Esq., safely housed at the Hummums Hotel, Covent Garden, where, less than two hours afterwards, they were joined by David Closs and Lydia Lockwood, both dashingly dressed, and, it seemed, in gleeful good humour. The plot was thickening, and rapidly too.

True, but what *was* the plot; what catastrophe did it foreshadow, and which were the villains, which the victims of the play? Puzzling queries these, and not even partially answered by the occurrences of the next fortnight: continuous parties of pleasure; visits to the theatres, at which William Rowcliffe was always Lydia Lockwood's beau; and researches on our part at Doctors' Commons, from which it resulted that no legacy, large or small, had fallen to any one of the name of Rowcliffe or Bennett. It almost seemed that we were labouring under some inexplicable delusion, chasing shadows, not tangible realities; and I was in the very act of writing to the

commissioner, begging him to appoint some other officer to pursue the wearying, bootless investigation, when a lady, desirous of speaking with me, was announced

"No lady, Mr. Waters," exclaimed the person that followed close behind the servant girl; "no lady, but a wretched, wronged, outraged woman! Do you not recognise me?" she added, tossing passionately aside, and tearing by her violence the costly veil which covered her face. "I know you very well!"

"Lydia Lockwood!"

"Yes, Lydia Lockwood, one of the conspirators whom you, stanch bloodhound of the law, have been, I more than suspect, for some time closely tracking. Well, sir, I am here to inform you that there are two conspiracies afloat, in one of which I am a cheater—in the other the cheated!"

"If this, Miss Lockwood, be a confession, let me warn you that all you say may be"—

"Used against me hereafter," broke in the infuriate woman, whose eyes glared with a fiery rage that cast a light as of insanity over her white, haggard countenance, though her speech was constrainedly calm and measured—unnaturally so. "Be it so; there is no terror for such a wretch as I in any 'hereafter' over which magistrates have power. Yet will I not be tamely, unresistingly sacrificed: other and guiltier lips than mine shall taste the bitter potion of which it was hoped, is hoped, I alone shall

be compelled to drink. But enough of vain words. You have really discovered nothing as yet, with all your practised cunning."

"Nothing of very great importance."

"Nothing of the slightest importance; nor without me could you do so till it were too late to profit by that knowledge. The avenging lightning will be hurled by my hand—my hand alone? Now hearken, sir, and heedfully. Tyrell imparted to me that it had come to his friend Closs's knowledge, in the course of business, that one Rowcliffe was entitled to a large sum of money that had lain unclaimed for a long time in the Funds or Consols, and which he could only obtain by Closs's aid. That being so, it was but fair, they argued, that Tyrell and Closs should have a share in the prize, and, that they might be certain of doing so, it was arranged that Tyrell should go to Bristol, acquaint Rowcliffe in general terms with his claim, bring him to London, profess great friendship for him, and, with my help entangle, fascinate him. O, I could tear my heart out to know that, in giving credence to such trash, I showed myself to be the vain fool they took me for: I was even to half-promise myself in marriage to the susceptible inexperienced simpleton—and, with them, work upon him till he consented to share the riches that had, as it were, dropped to him from the clouds. That accomplished, the promise which has lured me to ruin, destruction, crime, was to be immediately

fulfilled, and—but” suddenly broke off the unhappy young woman, and, speaking with accelerated rapidity, “but I need not waste sentiment upon Mr. Waters. Well, all this was a tissue—warp and woof—of unmitigated lies. William Rowcliffe was entitled to no money; but a girl was, one Clara Bennett, who, it was known, loved Rowcliffe—puppy and simpleton that he is—but that is nothing new; and the plan of the confederates was—more correctly Closs’s plan, for he alone had the brains to conceive it—was this: Tyrell was to see the Bennetts at Swindon—ah! you know all about that, I dare say—under pretence of procuring William Rowcliffe’s address, which was already so well known to them that Closs knew both him and his mother personally; he had been, I think, engaged in defending the elder Rowcliffe, who was convicted of some crime. Well, Tyrell, having obtained the address, and incidentally mentioned Rowcliffe’s pretended accession of wealth, was to affect, whilst passing himself off as a very great man, sudden, but involuntary admiration of the girl; with a view, of course, to an ulterior, well-meditated purpose. Everything fell out as desired and anticipated. Rowcliffe’s empty head was turned with his imaginary high fortune; Clara Bennett was no longer good enough for him; and the insolent booby told her so to her face, as he himself boasted to me last Thursday afternoon, a few hours after her arrival, I am sure at Tyrell’s suggestion, in London,

accompanied by her father. A terrible scene ensued : the young woman fainted, and, upon recovering, found that, though the recreant swain was gone, Alexander Champneys Tyrell remained, who had no longer any hesitation in declaring his devotion for her ; and the upshot was, that the scorned and slighted girl, urged by her father, dreading to encounter the sneers that would await her should she return home unmarried, fell into the trap set for her ; and on the day after to-morrow Clara Bennett will be Mrs. Tyrell ! Only think, will have the honour of being Alexander Champneys Tyrell's lady-wife ! ho, ho ! Well, one can but laugh to think how strange a world this is we live in ; and what fearful slips sometimes occur 'twixt cups and lips. 'Pon my word that is rhyme, if you take it in time—is it not, clever Mr. Waters ?'

The longer I listened to Lydia Lockwood the stronger grew my conviction that she was positively insane ; or that—but no, that was not the excitement of drink ; not originally or chiefly, at all events.

"Your disclosures, Miss Lockwood," I hesitatingly began, "would—"

"To the devil with your *Miss Lockwood*!" she fiercely interrupted. "To the devil, did I say? ah! true words are often spoken in jest; false ones by solemn oaths! You were going to say, no doubt," she added, with renewed vivacity, "that I could foil those wretches without your help. True; but it glanced

across me that my purpose might not hold ; and that it were well to place the matter beyond my own power. I shall not tell you, either, how I discovered all this. Enough that I have discovered it, and by—Well, good-bye ; at ten in the morning after to-morrow, remember, if I should forget it—which, however, is not very likely—that the parson will ask if there is any just cause or impediment why Alexander Tyrell and Clara Bennett should not be joined in holy wedlock. Just cause ! O thou all-seeing Christ !

She was gone !

A few sentences will finish this narrative. Clara Bennett and her father, apprised by me of the true state of affairs, left London for Swindon the next evening ; and in the following day's evening papers there appeared this paragraph :—‘ DETERMINED SUICIDE.—Early this morning a young woman was seen to throw herself off Westminster Bridge into the river : she was drowned. Her name is Lydia Lockwood.’

THE END.

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